

**Rakefet Sela-Sheffy  
and Miriam Shlesinger (eds.)**

# **Identity and Status in the Translational Professions**

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## Identity and Status in the Translational Professions

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### **Volume 32**

Identity and Status in the Translational Professions

Edited by Rakefet Sela-Sheffy and Miriam Shlesinger

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# Identity and Status in the Translational Professions

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## Table of contents

Preface	vii
Introduction	1
<i>Rakefet Sela-Sheffy and Miriam Shlesinger</i>	
Legal and translational occupations in Spain: Regulation and specialization in jurisdictional struggles	11
<i>Esther Monzó</i>	
Effectiveness of translator certification as a signaling device: Views from the translator recruiters	31
<i>Andy Lung Jan Chan</i>	
Conference interpreting: Surveying the profession	49
<i>Franz Pöchhacker</i>	
Occupation or profession: A survey of the translators' world	65
<i>David Katan</i>	
Attitudes to role, status and professional identity in interpreters and translators with Chinese in Shanghai and Taipei	89
<i>Robin Setton and Alice Guo Liangliang</i>	
Conference interpreters and their self-representation: A worldwide web-based survey	119
<i>Cornelia Zwischenberger</i>	
Habitus and self-image of native literary author-translators in diglossic societies	135
<i>Reine Meylaerts</i>	
The people behind the words: Professional profiles and activity patterns of translators of Arabic literature into Hebrew (1896–2009)	155
<i>Hannah Amit-Kochavi</i>	
Revised translations, revised identities: (Auto)biographical contextualization of translation	173
<i>Elena Baibikov</i>	

VI Table of contents

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Conference interpreters and their perception of culture: From the narratives of Japanese pioneers <i>Kumiko Torikai</i>	189
Images of the court interpreter: Professional identity, role definition and self-image <i>Ruth Morris</i>	209
A professional ideology in the making: Bilingual youngsters interpreting for their communities and the notion of (no) choice <i>Claudia V. Angelelli</i>	231
“Boundary work” as a concept for studying professionalization processes in the interpreting field <i>Nadja Grbić</i>	247
The task of the interpreter in the struggle of the other for empowerment: Mythical utopia or sine qua non of professionalism? <i>Şebnem Bahadır</i>	263
Index	279

## Preface

Rakefet Sela-Sheffy and Miriam Shlesinger

This volume is a hardback edition of the two back-to-back special issues of *Translation and Interpreting Studies* (TIS issue 4(2), 2009 and issue 5(1), 2010) which we had the privilege of co-editing. The articles assembled here are revised versions of papers presented at the international workshop organized by the editors, and held in Tel Aviv in March 2009 under the auspices of the Israel Science Foundation (ISF). The workshop was planned as a brainstorming encounter between people working in different disciplines, who share a scholarly interest in exploring the identity and status of the professions. While our focal case was that of translators and interpreters, our goal with this workshop was to contribute to the study of identity in the framework of occupational fields in general. We aimed at deepening and expanding our theoretical and empirical understanding of identity and status processes in *semi-professional settings* in different parts of the world, with special reference to the field of *translators and interpreters*, based on a variety of studies, and the examination of research methodologies, within the broader context of the interface between TS and Culture Research. The workshop papers explored parallel and differentiating dynamics between the various translatorial professions, as well as other semi-professional occupations, in different cultural and national settings.

This workshop took place within the framework of a research project we directed between 2006 and 2009 dedicated to this topic (ISF 619/06; see Sela-Sheffy & Shlesinger 2008, Sela-Sheffy 2010, Shlesinger & Voinova [forthcoming]),<sup>1</sup> a qualitative, interview-based study, aiming at a comparative analysis of identity and status among six sectors of translators, interpreters and subtitlers in Israel today. Since there is no systematic listing or other documentation of this voiceless working community, in-depth interviews have been our only resource. Locating the candidates and going out on interviews all over the country has been an exciting

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1. "Strategies of image making and status advancement of a marginal occupational group: translators and interpreters in Israel as a case in point," (Israel Science Foundation grant no. 619/06, 2006-2009). We are indebted to Michal Abramovich, Tanya Voinova, Netta Kamminsky and Tamar Priel who have assisted us with this research.



experience. Our heartfelt thanks go to all our ninety-five interviewees, who were willing to open up and share with us their stories, their views and their aspirations and from whom we learned so much. All ninety-five interviews have been painstakingly transcribed and documented. Since these are unstructured interviews, each lasting around two hours, they have yielded a huge amount of complex material. We are currently in the process of analyzing this rich corpus of fascinating personal accounts, aiming to produce a first comprehensive picture of Israeli translators' identity and professional attitudes based on their own testimonies.

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The volume is divided into two parts, comprising fourteen articles – a structure that reflects our idea of the interrelatedness between structural aspects of the field and macro-level question of professional status, on the one hand, and micro-level aspects of the professional identity, on the other. These articles cut across varied translatorial and geographical arenas, from community interpreters to top literary translators, from Japan to North America. Reporting on empirical studies, they bring to the fore central theoretical issues related to translators' occupational position, as well as methodological questions, such as the use of oral history or cultural biographies, on the one hand, or the use of qualitative measures like questionnaires, on the other.

## 1. Questions of Status and Field

The first part comprises six articles, all dealing with large-scale processes and group tendencies and attitudes towards the professional status of translators and/or interpreters. **Esther Monzó-Nebot** offers a study of status struggles between occupational groups investing in different types of symbolic capital, using an example from professionalization processes of translators and interpreters in Spain. Starting with a theoretical synthesis of concepts from both the sociology of professions and Bourdieu's economy of practice, her article "Legal and Translational Occupations in Spain: Regulation and Specialization in Jurisdictional Struggles" highlights two major status strategies – distinction and legitimation – as employed by occupational groups to advance their interests in the market. Using this framework she discusses two particular conflicts of Spanish certified ('sworn') translators and interpreters – their struggles against public notaries and against court translators and interpreters, who claim jurisdiction. Her analysis traces the strategies used by the certified translators to reclaim their status.

**Andy Chan** addresses the interrelatedness between status and professionalization in the emerging sector of in-house translators. His study of the “Effectiveness of Translator Certification as a Signaling Device: Views from the Translator Recruiters” brings insights on the problem of translator certification in Hong Kong, which has recently attracted much attention in both professional and academic circles, with a view to examining its symbolic power in creating occupational opportunities for translators. Building on the economic theory of signaling, and using an experiment based on fictitious translators’ resumé, as well as interviews with translator recruiters, he examines the importance of formal educational qualifications in the recruiters’ decisions to hire translators. His findings point to the relatively minor role of certification in producing the desired image, by contrast to the role of an academic degree.

An overview on survey research in the field of interpreting is provided by **Franz Pöchhacker**, who introduces “Conference Interpreting: Surveying the Profession,” with a corpus of 40 survey-based studies among conference interpreters as a way of gaining knowledge about the profession, including the role perception of individual practitioners. Touching on qualitative research design issues such as sampling and question types, he shows that the *role* of conference interpreters emerges as one of their dominant concerns as far as their occupational status is concerned.

The subsequent three articles in this section are all survey-based. **David Katan**, in his “Occupation or Profession: A Survey of the Translators’ World,” analyzes the results of several hundred replies to a widely circulated online questionnaire, focusing on translators’ and interpreters’ mindset and their perception of their working world, inquiring specifically about the impact of translation theory and university training on their self-perception as professionals. Katan’s questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions, giving rise to intriguing discrepancies between responses of one and the same respondent. His results point to a non-significant influence of theory and training on the occupational self-image of the respondents, most of whom engage in intricate identity work and declare, on the one hand, that they feel themselves to be ‘professionals,’ due to their specialized knowledge and abilities, and on the other hand, that they are acutely aware of their lower social status. Notwithstanding, most of them are reluctant to change their occupational status quo.

Similarly, in their “Attitudes to Role, Status and Professional Identity in Interpreters and Translators with Chinese in Shanghai and Taipei,” **Robin Setton** and **Alice Guo Liangliang** report on a survey, the first of its kind in mainland China and Taiwan, on patterns of professional practice, self-perceptions and aspirations of translators and interpreters, given the rising demand for their work in the wake of China’s emergence as a major player in the global economy. All in all, their

findings point to a burgeoning professionalization process, with most respondents expressing a pragmatic attitude to their role and their contribution to society while downplaying ‘cultural mediation.’

In her “Conference Interpreters and their Self-representation: A Worldwide Web-based Survey,” **Cornelia Zwischenberger** analyzes findings from a recent World Wide Web-based survey (limited, in this case, to members of the International Association of Conference Interpreters [AIIC]), outlining the methodological potential and pitfalls of *Web-based* surveys, which have gradually penetrated Translation Studies. Comparing existing meta-texts and newly collected evidence, she traces the ways respondents describe their role and claim key-role in guaranteeing successful communications.

## 2. Questions of Role and Identity

The second part of this volume comprises eight articles, all based on qualitative studies which deal with various aspects of translators’ and interpreters’ habitus, and sense of identity, focusing on defined groups or individual perspectives. In her “Habitus and Self-Image of Native Literary Author-Translators in Diglossic Societies,” **Reine Meylaerts** defends the need to study translators’ socio-biographies as part of the discussion of the complexity and dynamism of translators’ habitus, especially given this field’s weak professional differentiation. This, according to Meylaerts, is all the more applicable for literary author-translators in societies with fundamental socio-linguistic conflicts and hierarchies, such as those characterizing the Belgian cultural sphere. Starting with a typology of a Belgian author-translator habitus, she illustrates her argument through a socio-biographical analysis of Camille Melloy, a native translator in the culturally conflicted context of early twentieth century Belgium.

Another historical study on translators’ habitus is offered by **Hannah Amit-Kochavi**, in her “Professional Profiles and Activity Patterns of Translators of Arabic Literature into Hebrew.” She introduces a (historical as well as questionnaire-based) study of a group of literary translators from Arabic into Hebrew in British-ruled Palestine and later in Israel, the first attempt at mapping this still understudied, complex cultural territory. Elaborating on ethnic, educational, professional and ideological characteristics of these translators, her analysis also reveals patterns of cooperation between these individuals as a self-aware group that attempts to preserve a peripheral translation field within an indifferent, sometimes hostile target culture. She shows that for these people – native Arabs, Druze or Jewish immigrants from Arab territories, often having other ‘Arabic-dependent’

occupations – literary translation from Arabic into Hebrew has served both a venue for anti-consensual attitudes as well as a legitimating channel for engaging in their own literary writing.

From a different perspective, **Elena Baibikov** zooms in again on a single case, in an attempt to trace a process of professional identity formation of an individual translator. In her “Revised Translations, Revised Identities: (Auto)Biographical Contextualization of Translation,” she focuses on three Japanese versions of one collection of texts – Chekhov’s letters to his wife – all produced by the now-celebrated female Japanese translator of Russian literature, Yuasa Yoshiko. Aiming to contextualize the actual translation practices of Yoshiko, who enjoys academic attention as an intellectual figure but not as a translator, Baibikov uses knowledge of the translator’s gendered biography to discuss the ways her professional action changes at different stages of her life in relation to changing social and personal settings.

An oral history study of the Japanese cultural scene is introduced by **Torikai Kumiko**, in her “Conference Interpreters and Their Perception of Culture: From the Narratives of Japanese Pioneers.” Based on life-story interviews with five pioneering conference and diplomatic interpreters in post-WWII Japan, Kumiko explores their perceptions about culture and cultural barriers in communication – and compares them with their role perceptions and actual practice. She shows that while her interviewees were on the whole uninterested in discussing questions of cultural differences and accepted their role as invisible (a tendency that often emerges also from questionnaires, see, i.e., Setton & Guo Liangliang in this volume), what emerges from their life stories is a greater sense (albeit not necessarily entailing awareness) of cultural mediation and of their being indispensable, active participants in intercultural communication.

Along similar lines, tackling the complex issue of interpreters’ sense of agency – this time with reference to court interpreters – **Ruth Morris** provides us with further insights into “Images of the Court Interpreters; Professional Identity, Role Definition and Self-Image.” Using an example from a seventeenth-century murder trial in England, as well as several modern cases, she traces the growing tendency of court interpreters to move away from their expected role as ‘neutral’ conduits and to claim greater agency and competency in influencing the legal process.

**Claudia Angelelli** sheds light on the world of community interpreters. In her “A Professional Ideology in the Making: Bilingual Youngsters Interpreting for Their Communities and the Notion of (no) Choice,” she introduces a study of circumstantial bilinguals who wind up serving as interpreters for their families and communities. Aiming to expand the meager research that exists about the lived experiences of such interpreters – whose background is responsible for their

exceptional types of bilingualism – Angelelli focuses on youngsters in families of Hispanic immigrants in North America, who inevitably act as language and communication brokers. Elaborating on their developing a sense of agency in mediating between minority-language speakers and the target society, she also uses her finding to draw implications for interpreter training (e.g. calling for greater attention to differences in expectations and linguistic talents of elective and circumstantial interpreters) and for teaching bilingual youngsters.

A theoretical discussion of “Boundary work’ as a Concept for Studying Professionalization Processes in the Interpreting Field” is introduced by **Nadja Grbić**. Surveying the concept of ‘boundary work’ as applied to the classification of various scientific disciplines, Grbić focuses on the notion of ‘professional’ vs. ‘non-professional,’ in introducing an outline of her new research on the gradual emergence of sign language interpreters as a distinct occupational group in Austria. Following theoreticians such as Gieryn, Zerubavel, Lamont and others, she raises questions as to nature of differences and similarities – by whom and at what stage they are perceived, etc.

Finally, **Şebnem Bahadır** discusses questions of translator’ ethics in her “The Task of the Interpreter in the Struggle of the other for empowerment: Mythical Utopia or *Sine Qua Non* of Professionalism?” She addresses the interpreters’ dilemma in positioning themselves, given the paradox of their having to perceive and speak in the name of others while using their own voice and language. Drawing particularly on politically loaded settings, such as detention camps, asylum seekers, sanctuaries, refugee camps or occupied territories and areas of military conflict, she puts forth the moral argument that, as part of their professional responsibility as the ‘experts,’ interpreters must reflect on and take into account the dangers and opportunities of their in-between position.

All of the contributions to this volume reflect their authors’ growing interest in learning about the motivations, aspirations, social background and social constraints of translators and interpreters as real people, proceeding from the assumption that all these factors underlie translatorial performances. Altogether, this compendium of studies contributes to a shift of focus in the ongoing endeavor of Translation Studies to acquire better understanding of translation and interpreting as socially embedded practices, and to assess the power of these complex practices as agency of social intervention. We hope that this volume provides insights and lenses for further developing this direction of research within Translation Studies.

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# Introduction

Rakefet Sela-Sheffy

Questions of identity and status have only recently begun attracting attention in Translation Studies. The wave of academic interest in sociological perspectives on translation and interpreting has brought to the fore issues of power and ideology, role and ethics (e.g., Calzada-Perez 2003, Angelleli 2004, Diriker 2004, Wadensjo et al. 2004, Inghilleri 2005, Pym et al. 2006, Wolf 2002, Wolf & Fukari 2007, Milton & Bandia 2009), as well as problems of translation markets and the field of translation (Heilbron 1999, Gouanvic 2005, Parada & Díaz Fouces 2006, Sapiro 2010), including an emerging discussion of translators' habitus (Simeoni 1998, Inghilleri 2003, Sapiro 2004b, Sela-Sheffy 2005, Torikai 2009). Relatively little research has so far been devoted, however, to the social formation of translators as specific professional groups subject to their own social constraints, with their particular access to resources, their status struggles and their sense of professional selves (see, however, Henderson 1987, Hammond 1994, Choi & Lim 2002, Sapiro 2004a, Sela-Sheffy 2006, 2008, 2010, Gouadec 2007, Dam & Zethsen 2008, 2010, Koskinen 2009, Shlesinger & Voinova [forthcoming]).

This theoretical landscape seems to have developed as a natural trajectory of TS. On the one hand, the bulk of writing on translation norms in recent decades has already established the importance of cultural factors and systemic relations in constraining the performance of translators and interpreters (Toury 1995a, 1999, Lambert 2006, Schäffner 1998, Shlesinger 1989, 1991, 1999, Hermans 1999, Meylaerts 2008, Sapiro 2008, Yannakopoulou 2008). On the other hand, critical writings have offered assessment and judgment of the alleged invisibility and submissiveness of translators (Venuti 1995, 1998). A common denominator of all these theoretical discussions has been the (implicit or explicit) assumption that the majority of translators, in many different social settings, suffer from an inferior status, manifested in their translation output by a tendency to conform to prevailing domestic cultural norms and in their reluctance to claim active agency in cultural change (exceptions that problematize this assumption are periods of concentrated efforts of culture planning with translators serving as important agents of change; see, e.g., Even-Zohar 1990, Toury 2002 – on the case of modern



Hebrew; Ayluçtarhan 2007 and Tahir-Gürçağlar 2008 – on the case of modern Turkish). However, having emerged historically from the tradition of philology, linguistics and literary studies, the leading paradigms of TS have been focused, as a rule, on the practices of translation and their communicative contexts. A comprehensive research project that centers on the complex factors concerning the agency of the practitioners themselves, as those who perform these practices in their immediate social surroundings, still awaits its turn.

The collection of articles in this volume is an attempt to contribute to this emerging research, which stands at the crossroad of Translation Studies and Culture Research. It aims to zoom in on translators' and interpreters' own understanding of their role and status, to tracing their attitudes and shedding light on the background of those individuals who create and shape the translating professions, and the way they locate themselves as professionals and maintain a specific identity and dignity.

Identity is now a buzzword in the humanities and the social sciences. Conceived not as a fixed entity, but rather as a dynamic and multi-layered cultural construct, collectively produced and re-produced through social struggles, and in transforming cultural settings, it has everything to do with status and self-esteem. Surprisingly, however, it has scarcely been discussed with reference to the occupational context as such. While academic studies and public debates over identity focus primarily on typically political categories of stereotypization and hierarchy, such as ethnicity, race, gender or religion, the *occupational* dimension is given scant attention. However, the role of occupations or professions in shaping identities can hardly be overstated; work, after all, is what many people do during large parts of their lives (Linde 1993). Not only do occupations constitute major components of people's self-perception, but they often create fields of action in which cultural repertoires are constantly being constructed and negotiated, and group identity and values maintained and perpetuated or transformed, thereby building people's perception of themselves and their world (Davis 1994). Thinking about occupations in this way opens many fascinating directions for the study of human agency in creating, maintaining and changing their immediate and broader social spaces, and the way the individuals themselves are created and transformed while moving in these spaces.

Translation is a fruitful field for the study of precisely such social creativity. It is the contradiction between the potential power of translators and interpreters as cultural mediators, on the one hand, and their obscure professional status and alleged sense of submissiveness, on the other, that makes them such an intriguing occupational group. Their insecure status as a profession is especially paradoxical today, as so much attention is being devoted to cross-cultural processes such as

globalization, migration and trans-nationalism. While the social agency of translators may seem less pivotal in settled cultural contexts with highly established, self-assured cores and strong, hegemonic cultural traditions (such as the Anglo-American ones; e.g., Gentzler 2002), it is clearly evident in multicultural, peripheral or emerging social settings (e.g., in the rise of modern Turkey; Ayluçtarhan 2007, Tahir-Gürçağlar 2008, Demircioğlu 2009). Even in the former environments, with their overpowering mechanism of naturalization and anti-foreignization, knowledge of (certain) foreign languages and borrowing from (certain) foreign cultures are warmly welcome and are valued as important symbolic resources. In the latter environments, however, which depend more acutely on procedures of translation for their maintainability, translators' position as professionals would have been expected to be much stronger and more visible (Even-Zohar 1990).

Nevertheless, all the available evidence indicates that the professional status of translators and interpreters is, by and large, ambivalent and insecure. Complaints are rife about their being seen as 'servants' of a higher authority, and as those who belong 'behind the scenes' (Jänis 1996), "not as aware as they might be of their own power" (Chesterman & Wagner 2002). This does not mean that they are actually submissive and lacking in occupational pride, or that they are at the bottom of the occupational prestige ladder. Nonetheless, their self-perception and dignity as an occupation are still vague and are constantly questioned, negotiated or fought for. This identity problem is the underlying theme of the articles in this collection. Not only does it bear directly on translators' and interpreters' job performance, it also lends urgency to their self-imaging, on which they depend for recognition (Sela-Sheffy 2008). From the perspective of the sociology of professions, translators and interpreters are thus an extreme example of an understudied semiprofessional occupation.

The sociological literature on professions offers a body of theory and history of the formation of modern professions, their institutions, forms of knowledge, career patterns, education and jurisdiction (e.g., Larson 1977, Abbott 1988, Torstendahl and Burrage 1990, Freidson 1994, Macdonald 1995). Concentrating on institutional and formal factors, these studies are largely embedded in the context of the more traditionally institutionalized and prestigious liberal professions known as the 'success stories' of professionalism, notably medicine, law and accounting. However, from our point of view, precisely the 'failed professionalizing' occupations (Elsaka 2005), or the underrated ones, offer exciting case studies, in that they reveal more acutely the strategies of coping with threatened status. Among other occupational groups that are to varying extents under-professionalized or marginalized – such as journalists, school teachers, nurses or craft-artists – translators and interpreters serve a quintessential case for examining how an occupational group deals with its own indeterminacy and marginality.

Unlike sociologists of the professions, who assign much weight to formal, institutional and economic factors of the professions, our aim with the present volume has been to shed more light on the symbolically functional codes, attitudes and strategies of action shared by the practitioners themselves, as a social figuration, so as to maintain their status as an occupational group. This aspect stands at the heart of the theory of human figurations (Elias 1993, 1996) or that of cultural fields (Bourdieu 1980, 1986), theories designed to deal especially with those socio-cultural formations that lack clear, institutionalized boundaries. Rather than through formal procedures and means of control, the dynamics of a group develops, in Elias's and Bourdieu's view, through a set of distinguishing mental dispositions (a *habitus*) that are internalized and exercised by its members (Bourdieu 1986; also Jenkins 1992, Lahire 2003, Sapiro 2004b, Sheffy 1997, Sela-Sheffy 2005). Typically, Bourdieu's theoretical framework has drawn its examples from fields that defy professionalization, or are hardly defined as occupations at all, such as the intellectual field, or the arts. To a great extent, such fields serve as models for status dynamics in the field of translation (Sela-Sheffy 2006, 2008, 2010).

Consequently, while the sociological theory of occupational prestige highlights economic achievements as parameters of prestige evaluation (Treiman 1977, Nam & Powers 1983), our present approach draws attention to the cultural resources that endow an occupation with symbolic values, beyond material and economic constraints, assuming that these values are defined by the groups of actors competing with each other in each and every field (Bourdieu 1985). Understanding translation as a site of social action in this sense thus emphasizes the personal dispositions of its practitioners and their group relations. How these individuals perceive themselves, what kind of capital they pursue, how they struggle to achieve it and what their cultural resources are, all these questions are at the core of the articles in this volume.

All this naturally raises important methodological questions. While several works in this collection apply qualitative methods, such as text analysis, biographical studies or interviews, others report on primarily quantitative (survey) studies. It emerges from these articles that quite an impressive body of knowledge has already been gathered by surveys on translators in different parts of the world. Serving still as a major tool of sociological research, this quantitative method poses intriguing challenges to culture analysis; e.g., a well-known problem in analyzing surveys is that respondents' answers cannot be taken at face value, as if they were reporting the unmediated reality of their life and attitudes. The fact is often disguised that, like any other communicative practice, responding to questionnaires is motivated by the need to maintain dignity. As Bourdieu (1983) has argued, people will only provide what they assume to be the 'right' and respectable answer,

according to their own cultural repertoire. However, since the questionnaires reflect the researchers' model of the world, respondents are often requested to address questions to which they do not have ready-made answers as part of their own cultural toolkit (to use Ann Swidler's concept; 1986), therefore the results may often remain enigmatic, if not misleading. Bearing all this in mind, however, surveys are still an important tool for collecting large-scale rich evidence, which can reveal certain patterns in the practitioners' commonly accepted attitudes towards their professions. Thus, in defining the aims and focus of the present volume in this way, three basic assumptions must be emphasized:

1. This endeavor is not meant as a call for yet another shift of paradigms in TS, as it were, towards purely sociological research. Rather, it is an attempt to look at translators from a different, external angle, as a field of cultural production. This attempt can also contribute to furthering a systematic integration of socio-cultural insights and working tools into the currently accepted frameworks of studying translation within complex cultural contexts. By analogy to other fruitful interdisciplinary research frameworks, such as socio-linguistics, cultural sociology or sociological history, such integration is also expected to be productive for our understanding of translation activities. That is, concentrating attention on the practitioners themselves should also give rise to valuable insights into the ways these individuals may act and perform as translators (Toury 1995a).
2. Consequently, this volume is not intended as a call for a new theory of translation; it is, however, intended to advance access to and better use of existing Culture Research theoretical frameworks. Following previous studies, as well as our own and the studies reported in the present collection of articles, we suggest that these theoretical frameworks consist mainly of two major directions, namely: (1) that of the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1985, 1986) for examining the dispositions and value scales of the different groups of translators and interpreters; and (2) that of the *repertoire* (Swidler 1986, Even-Zohar 1997) for accounting for the multilayered and diversified stocks of working patterns available in specific fields, constraining the action of those who enter them.
3. Finally, an underlying assumption of this collection of articles is also that a Culture Research approach contributes to the critical discourse on translators' ethics and ideology and to the activist demand on interfering with and reformulating translators' social role. We need, so we believe, to have a better idea about the people who do translation – their background, aspirations and sentiments, as well as about their social spaces and specific constraints – in order to take an effective stand on questions of translators' agency and empowerment.

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# Legal and translational occupations in Spain

## Regulation and specialization in jurisdictional struggles

Esther Monzó

The aim of this article is twofold. First, I will outline a theoretical framework that synthesizes some concepts from both the sociology of professions and Bourdieu's economy of practice. Within this framework, distinction and legitimation will be highlighted as two major strategies employed by occupational groups to advance their interests within the labor market. In the second part of the article, I will discuss two particular conflicts, both of which involve Spanish certified (or "sworn" in European Spanish) translators and interpreters (TIs). The first is a jurisdictional struggle between certified TIs and notaries public (a legal occupation) and the other, a struggle between certified TIs and court TIs. These struggles illustrate how the jurisdiction, the segment of the labor market formerly occupied by certified TIs, has been progressively claimed by notaries public and court TIs through various strategies and processes, and how certified TIs have in turn reacted by pursuing strategies of their own. These examples show how and why a particular group may lose ground to other groups using diverse strategies and investing different types of capital (in Bourdieu's sense of the term). Moreover, these cases exemplify how some professionalization processes and projects have worked in the Spanish context and how certain occupational groups are developing professionalization strategies of their own.

**Keywords:** certified translators and interpreters, distinction, legitimation, Spanish translators and interpreters, sworn translation

### Introduction

The field of translation is presently subject to changes which affect communication within the community and with clients and with society at large. After centuries of turning their backs on corporative practices commonly found in other professions,

Spanish translators are beginning to organize and to make themselves socially visible. They are doing this by creating structures for the management of their collective interests and by pressing for broader rights; within the academic realm there is also an ongoing struggle in defense of the importance of translation as a field of study in its own right. The ways in which professionals are trained, access the market and coexist with other occupations is also evolving.

Changes, however, can only develop where the social context presents the appropriate conditions. A power imbalance provides an appropriate milieu for struggles for it allows other professional groups legally to encroach upon a jurisdiction that translators want to retain for themselves. This leads to the perception of intrusion and feelings of being threatened, which in turn trigger individual micro-resistance, that is, resistance to power at the individual level, with subtle effects. The field becomes a locus for organized resistance for, as Michel Foucault put it, “where there is power, there is resistance” (1979:95). Individuals may take action and cooperate, collectively creating training structures and associations that voice the concerns of hundreds of individuals; a common interpretation of professional and social problems is thus spread within the group, and a perception of translation as a profession is fostered in society. In any case, these are some of the results anticipated by Wilensky’s model (1964) of the development of professions, taken up later by different occupational groups, such as nurses or engineers, when attempting to improve their status. Occupational groups pursuing a professionalization project move forward in the direction current social conditions allow. Foreseeing an improvement in status, they proceed towards professionalizing the task by imitation of other occupational groups that exhibit features they want for themselves.

## **Theoretical framework**

Of course, there has been much scholarly thinking in relation to professions, and some of the reflections produced within the sociology of professions have entered the field of translation studies. For my purposes, I have chosen two main concepts: the depiction of society as a market of problems (Abbot 1988) for which different occupational groups try to provide solutions of their own, and the concept of jurisdiction, the domination of an area of activity derived from the exclusive right acquired by a particular profession to solve a particular problem within that market. Professions may therefore be defined as occupational groups to which society entrusts the solution of a particular kind of problem which requires solving, and the solution is sufficiently challenging that it is handed over to an exclusive

group of qualified agents. The occupation, of course, will have to convince society to do so by providing the most satisfactory solution among those available in the market. On the other hand, the individuals within the occupational group and the group as a collective agent must consider the capital (resources, privileges or prestige) they receive for their services valuable enough to continue investing their energies in ongoing jurisdictional struggles and negotiations.

A major reward the occupational group as a collective body will receive, if it attains professional status, is exclusive jurisdiction, that is, the right legitimately to exclude other groups from providing alternative solutions to the very same problem on the basis of alternative knowledge or knowledge acquired by alternative means (such as non-recognized training programs). It is essential that society trust the occupational group's capacity to provide the best possible solution in order to grant it the right to exclude others. Such a right means power, and the distribution of power within society is never equitable. Indeed, several theorists view such imbalance as a feature inherent in all systems. Imbalance brings about dynamism as well as inequality insofar as power and resistance are strong forces that produce changes in a system. Some authors (Beauvoir 1978) argue that communities begin to think of themselves as such because their positions, their particular interests, are contested. Thus, the power wielded by professions makes other groups of people who are not eligible or willing to enter that same group feel pressured, challenged and attacked, which in turn sparks resistance. These other groups set forces in motion to improve their situation and to contest the power wielded by the dominant groups. And when these forces are organized, professionalization (Larson 1977) as a process becomes a recurrent strategy and, to a certain extent, a ready-made resource in society for it is exercised in order to emulate a stronger group by appropriating those traits purported to identify a privileged group, that is, a profession.

As a process, professionalization leads to an upsurge in institutionalized discourses, perceptions, constructions and actions. At first these are produced within the profession, then they spread throughout the professional group and are used to establish boundaries within society (and here trust becomes a most relevant concept; see Dyer 1988). Among those boundaries, a system of credentials has been commonly highlighted in the literature on the sociology of professions, both by scholars working from the "traits approach" and by Weberian scholars focusing on professions as monopoly-seeking structures (Collins 1979). Credentials serve to distinguish qualified from non-qualified, expert from lay. When expertise is certified, society may be persuaded not to hire "non-qualified" professionals; access to the profession can be controlled, and thus the group may obtain exclusive rights over the problem in question.

Credentials act as a tool for distinction (Bourdieu 1984) and social closure (Parkin 1971; Parkin 1974; 1979; Weber 1958). Closure involves both inclusion and exclusion, twin processes by which individuals are accepted within social groups on the basis of criteria defined and justified within the group itself or are denied access. Similarly, Bourdieu's notion of distinction is a classifying concept which allows for groups of individuals to be created and identified ("expressed or betrayed") within society (Bourdieu 1984:6) by mastering knowledge, defending values, or exerting other types of cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1970). Bourdieu's work on distinction is largely based on aesthetic practices and preferences, and the data he collected and analyzed indicate that every social group exhibits a relatively unique pattern of taste and a relatively unique mix of capital, that is cultural, economic and social capital (Bourdieu 1984). Distinction is therefore exhibited in interaction whereas credentials are institutionalized cultural capital that serves as an easy-to-use sieve permitting social closure to occur. Credentials indicate that a professional has undergone the specific training and education to equip him or her with the professional knowledge required to solve specific problems in a professional manner.

Practitioners are expected to possess specialized subject knowledge for professional practice. This knowledge is essential and highly specific and is shared among professionals, setting them clearly apart from lay people; it can be applied to specific problems in order to engender effective, acceptable solutions. Therefore, particular shared knowledge lies at the core of any solution a doctor or any other professional may provide. Society as a whole, however, would need to become specialized in all matters in order to recognize whether a doctor or any other professional truly possesses the requisite subject knowledge. As this is impossible, trust becomes a necessary component of professionalization. As Luhmann puts it, once we leave the sphere of familiarity, the world is complex and dominated by contingency. In this new and risky milieu (Luhmann 1991), we need to trust others to behave predictably according to expected rules in providing solutions for our problems (Luhmann 1988). But we do not trust every kind of knowledge as the basis for defining professional jurisdiction. For knowledge to work as a powerful instrument (Freidson 1988; Murphy 1988; Turner and Hodge 1970) in our present context, it must be rational and scientific, backed by institutions, and visible, both in its theoretical and practical dimensions, both tacitly and explicitly.

Knowledge is therefore essential provided it can be systematized, formalized, conveyed and applied, and is constantly updated so as to allow the group to protect itself and its members from claims arising from other groups which may develop alternative solutions. The dominant group will be able to do this as long as it is capable of generating trust in its cultural authority. This authority in

turn begets power, at times perceived as political and cultural influence (Freidson 1970a; 1988), at others as a link to economic and political elites (Johnson 1972), or as a privileged position in the market or among social classes (Larson 1984). Professions require the possession of a shared body of knowledge, which results in applications and generally-accepted and sought-after solutions. Moreover:

- A. The problems the profession is able and willing to solve must be repeated over time. Society must perceive them as recurrent, and the profession must be able to manage those problems.
- B. The solutions to the problems the profession handles must be organized. The profession must be seen as the ideal group to solve those problems on the basis of a typical professional process:
  - 1. An efficient analysis based on a particular body of coherent knowledge;
  - 2. The inference of what solution must be applied in accordance to this body of knowledge;
  - 3. The correct application of this ideal solution.
- C. Professional practices that follow these steps have an impact on the social milieu, and the more consistent the solution administered by different professionals in similar cases is, the more credit the individual and the profession as a group will obtain. As long as positive values can be attached to the process, legitimation, as Bledstein (1976) conceived it, will occur.

A body of coherent knowledge lies at the core of Bourdieu's concept of distinction (Bourdieu 1984) and Bledstein's (and then Haskell's) concept of legitimation (Bledstein 1976; Haskell 1984). I would suggest the combination of these two concepts as key to establishing exclusive professional jurisdiction. On the one hand, the dominant group must be able to distinguish its own solutions from those proposed by other groups that are in conflict with the one the dominant group aims to establish as the "right" one. This is done on the basis of cultural capital, which differentiates between an elite of "genuine" professionals and other "alleged" professionals or lay people.

On the other hand, the solution being posed as "the right one" must also be accepted, and so the group will have to make sure society attaches positive value to this particular solution, perceiving it as the best possible solution among those available in the market. Prestige — or legitimation in Bledstein's terms — is the goal, and strategies to obtain it may include: close ties to political elites, social awareness and visibility, common ethical practices and institutionalization of practices via legislation or regulations.

## Cultural capital and distinction

The processes of distinction and legitimation are intended to make society's view of a problem conform to the social, conceptual and legal definitions proposed by the professional group so as to establish the latter's jurisdiction over this market segment. Knowledge is the basis of the dominant group's cultural authority and is the most important weapon wielded by that group in interprofessional conflicts. Struggles between different professions seeking to obtain exclusive jurisdiction over a task or field are struggles to make one profession's interpretations and solutions for a given problem prevail over those of others.

The emergence of new technologies, groups, and professions, as well as changes in public policy and internal conflicts, all affect the system of professions as a whole, providing possibilities for improvement while also posing new threats. An organized internal stratification can prepare the group to meet these challenges; breaking down the tasks of the profession into knowledge development, management and application, and assigning these to specialist sub-groups enhances the group's competitiveness within the system.

Freidson identifies a certain trend towards internal stratification in professions, leading to a distinction between an administrative elite, a knowledge elite, and "rank and file professionals" (Freidson 1984) or ordinary practitioners; he would later introduce the concept of "elite practitioners" (Freidson 1986: 214). The knowledge elite develops knowledge standards, which are enforced by an administrative elite, and skills, which are applied by practitioners. In order to be competitive, this knowledge must be continually updated and constantly adapted to changes in the system. This is why research becomes essential, together with the transfer of new solutions to professionals through training centers, journals and associations. The people working in these institutions specializing in managerial tasks will be able to use the newly acquired knowledge to promote the group's interests.

Broadly speaking, and using Bourdieu's terms, knowledge is developed as cultural capital. The administrative elite will contribute symbolic capital by developing the suitable dispositions in society, and professionals will incorporate this knowledge. When competing with other groups, these forms of cultural capital will be used as resources and invested in the search for more capital and different forms and types of capital.

The point at which a profession undergoes key changes is when it establishes a system of credentials. Intellectual and administrative elites work together to institutionalize knowledge through a system of credentials, which professionals will have to obtain. A body of coherent knowledge can then be shared and conveyed to

society; and common perceptions, constructions and actions will be disseminated within the group so as to reproduce internal structures and reinforce the elite's position within the group. Individuals become corporate: they persuade the social system to rely on their professional capacity; they create institutions and accreditations to identify professionals; and society learns to distinguish professionals' cultural capital rather easily in its institutionalized form. Credentials are therefore expected to link institutional knowledge, professional practices and social perception.

### **Cultural capital, specialization, and division of labor**

According to Abbot (1988), occupations are able to establish their own jurisdiction over a particular problem either because no other group was exerting its own jurisdiction (the task is vacant) or because the new group manages to displace (sometimes erasing at the same time) another group which was previously responsible for the problem. "From time to time," Abbot notes, "tasks are created, abolished, or reshaped by external forces, with consequent jostling and readjustment within the system of professions" (1988:33). Reshaping may also be caused by specialization within the task the profession is accomplishing. One example of such reshaping may be the origin of psychiatry (Freidson and Lorber 2008). Initially, medical doctors did not consider mentally ill people to fall within their area of expertise, and a new body of knowledge was developed to deal with mental disorders (Abbot 1988; Freidson 1970b). In this way, the social division of labor is redefined by theoretical and technical specialization while the social position of the original professions remains uncontested.

### **Social capital and legitimation**

When growing up within a culture or social group or upon entering a (new) culture or social group, we undergo socialization processes, during which we learn from experience and from our interaction with others, significant others whose behavior patterns we generalize to the rest of society (Mead 1934). Once we leave the milieu of our common experience, familiar relationships no longer help us to manage the reactions of our interactional partners, either in informal or in professional situations. Trust is therefore necessary to create expectations regarding actions, values and perceptions. Past micro-level interactions (Seligman 1997) will have an effect on reciprocity and generate (or inhibit) the development of trust for future interactions, both on the micro- and the macro-levels (Coleman 1988).



Trust is created in interaction and generalized to future interactions with other people. In this sense, according to Newton, individual actors behave in ways that favor the general good not because they know the other actors and feel committed to them but because they trust that their own action will be rewarded through the development of relations (Newton 1999). This brings us to Bourdieu's concept of social capital, which may be best defined by the words of Bourdieu and Wacquant: "Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 119). Individuals benefit from the capital accrued to the group through their membership in it and, at the same time, the capital they gain in their own interactions is vested in the group: "The profits which accrue from membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity which makes them possible" (Bourdieu 1986: 248–49).

Professions, by definition, are highly trusted groups. Exclusive jurisdiction and the power to define their own credential system cannot appear at a stage when social capital is low. On the other hand, a profession's self-regulatory power points to the existence of a significant amount of social capital. Justifying the assertion of such power on the basis of expertise, professions often allege peer review to be the only valid means for assessing the quality of individual performances. This supplies the group with ample autonomy, including the design of its own system of credentialing (and the consequent social closure) as well as the power to impose rules on society relating to the use the professional services in question.

### **Legitimation through jurisdictional regulation**

Social capital is not naturally or socially given. It is the result of investment strategies and can in turn be used to generate increased quantities of other forms and types of capital. In fact, a profession's social capital may be invested in jurisdictional struggles to reinforce or obtain a group's domination over a given task it is in charge of accomplishing or seeks to be in charge of. The regulation of the field and getting society to accept enforcement measures to define boundaries that benefit the group's own interests are undertakings that require a great deal of social capital. "The volume of social capital possessed by a given agent," Bourdieu points out, "[...] depends on the size of the network of connections that he can effectively mobilize" (Bourdieu 1986: 249). Jurisdictional regulation is, indeed, the most powerful means of subordinating contenders in professional struggles (see also Felstiner 2005).

## Occupational struggles in the Spanish context

I will now apply the framework sketched out above to two recent cases involving jurisdictional conflicts regarding the occupation of Spanish certified (sworn) TIs. The first case concerns Spanish court TIs and the second relates to a conflict with Spanish notaries public. In order to help understand these disputes, I will provide some background information on the role played by these occupations in the Spanish context. Within the Spanish labor market boundaries have been drawn to distinguish the following groups:

- Occupations requiring a degree. Anyone wishing to be a doctor or a lawyer in Spain must have a University degree in medicine or law. Notaries public must also hold a degree in Law.
- Licensed occupations. For accessing some occupations, an individual must hold a special permit granted by the public administration. This is the case with certified (sworn) TIs (formerly in charge of translating and interpreting in courts of law).
- Free occupations. For such occupations no special requirement is set for entering the market. This is currently the case with court TIs, and also applies to legal (non-certified) TIs.
- Bureaucratic occupations. Access to public administration jobs requires passing an exam in order to guarantee fairness and equal opportunity to all, and to select employees on the basis of expertise and qualifications. In some cases, access to the occupation of court TI follows this pattern, and it is always the case with TIs for other administrations.

In order to understand the nature of the boundary disputes under discussion, it is necessary first to explain how certified (sworn) TIs obtain their license and what functions are entrusted to them in the Spanish system.

Spanish certified TIs are TIs who translate documents which must fulfil any official function and, according to the traditional formula, certified TIs must certify the faithfulness and integrity of their translations before signing and sealing them; they also interpret in official situations when required, sign and seal whatever proceedings are taken, and swear to the faithfulness and integrity of their work. They can translate and interpret from the foreign language they have been appointed to into Spanish and vice versa. They are not required to have any specific degree but must pass a public examination organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In this examination they are required to translate first a journalistic or literary text (although they do not have any jurisdiction over the translation of journalistic or literary texts) into Spanish without any supporting material, then a journalistic

or literary text into the foreign language (again without any supporting material), then a third text with legal or economic content into Spanish “with the help of a dictionary.” Finally they must show their oral skills in the foreign language in an interview before a panel of examiners. People with a degree in Translation and Interpreting can obtain a dispensation from sitting for this exam. This dispensation is regulated under law, but its application has been irregular and degrees have been dealt with in different ways depending on the university granting them. Moreover, there is a public registry of certified TIs, which contains the names and contact details of appointed TIs, as well as the declared fees they will charge for the following year. All this appears together with specific mention of the means by which they were appointed (that is, by examination before the Ministry, University degree or recognition of a similar European professional license).

Certified TIs are legally liable for their translations or interpretations, and so they act as, what Durkheim called, intermediary bodies, or *corps intermédiaires* (Durkheim 1893), that is, individuals situated between the government and society who are not civil servants but have been appointed by the government to exert some kind of power in the public interest. In the Spanish context, the government has vested in the official sworn translator a *precautionary and preventive security* function. This term refers to the mechanism whereby certain agents in the legal field prevent conflicts and litigation in court by ensuring agreement between parties and preventing possible future misunderstandings. Anglo-American law has a strong jurisdictional system and does not consider this sort of agent. However, countries with a Latin tradition do place considerable importance on these intermediaries, such as certified TIs and notaries public. They are portrayed as neutral parties with interpersonal duties and a heavy responsibility in ensuring communicative success. Consequently, any biased or in any other way undue performance must be remedied personally, which means that certified TIs can be sued or even prosecuted for any professional action harmful to their clients’ interests.

### Distinction and legitimation in the case of certified TIs

In reference to the theoretical framework set out above, I would like to point out how distinction and legitimation have been fostered in the case of Spanish certified TIs. According to Wilensky, one of the first steps towards cultural authority is to find a technical basis on which to ground professional claims; this knowledge would serve to bolster a claim of jurisdiction over a vacancy (in Abbot’s terminology) or to displace another group. Training would be proposed as a *sine qua non* for professional practice (due to the cognitive and technical difficulties associated

with the given task), and the public would be convinced that the profession offers uniquely adequate and trustworthy services. Structures linked to this process would include university training programs, professional associations and codes of practice.

Against this background, the case of Spanish certified TIs is rather peculiar. The technical basis underpinning the service (key to establishing distinction) has not been formalized and there is not even agreement as to the best training profile for certified TIs. Professionals usually do have a degree, and due to the aforementioned dispensation for graduates of university translation and interpreting programs, degrees in translation and interpreting are increasingly frequent. However, a degree in law is also highly appreciated both within the profession and in interaction with clients (mostly legal practitioners themselves). In the Spanish context, there are undergraduate programs in Translation and Interpreting and some universities offer specific training in official translation and interpreting. There are also some master's degrees for legal translation although relevant associations do not offer specialized courses for certified TIs. However, access to the profession is not determined by the kind of degree or training TIs may have, but rather is obtained by passing an exam held by a governmental agency, the *Oficina de Interpretación de Lenguas* (Language Interpreting Bureau), which falls under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As a consequence, prior training and specific specialized technical skills cannot be used by the community as a consistent resource in its struggle for cultural authority, legitimation and distinction.

On the other hand, there is a strong, originally regional, association (ATIJC, Catalan Association of Certified Translators and Interpreters, [www.atijc.com](http://www.atijc.com)), and several others operating at the local level, but there is no national association. ATIJC is, to date, the most influential association of certified TIs in the country. Its structure, however, remains that of a regional association, and its powers as a regulatory body are consequently limited. This has a clear effect on the way the community can influence both society and government when seeking distinction and legitimation through regulation and the acquisition of public trust. As far as internal communication is concerned, ATIJC publishes a professional bulletin every three months in which official claims filed with governmental agencies, research papers, glossaries and news are published. The bulletin provides a space for debate on how best to solve professional tasks and socio-professional problems. A specialized mailing list hosted at Yahoo Groups also serves a similar purpose, although the percentage of people actively participating is rather low and total membership amounts to only 404 people. ATIJC also supports and passes on to its new members a code of ethics originally drafted by a national (non-specialized) translation association, which no longer exists. This code is only around 2000 words long and

does not tackle questions specific to certified TIs. As a consequence, its contribution to the promotion of the public's trust (and legitimation) is rather limited.

In summary, there are no specific training programs for certified TIs; there is no national professional association; there is none at any level with a disciplinary function; there is no comprehensive code of practice; and the question of jurisdiction is contested in some areas, as we will see below. However, there are a number of university programs in translation and interpreting as well as active associations representing certified TIs that promote observance of certain basic principles. Moreover, certified translation and interpreting is an object of interest for Spanish translation scholars, and there are people working full-time as certified TIs. The situation may not be ideal, but a jurisdiction has been in force since the sixteenth century (Cáceres Würsig and Pérez González 2003; Peñarroja Fa 2000), internal stratification is developing, and the prestige traditionally accorded to certified TIs has been relatively high (Mayoral Asensio 2000; 2003).

The question, therefore, is how exclusivity can be preserved under such conditions. One possible answer is legislation. It has been made abundantly clear that self-regulation is a strong weapon when groups are involved in jurisdictional struggles, and that it is only possible when the social capital accrued by the occupational group is high. Government legislation is not exclusively controlled by an occupational group, and results may not live up to the group's expectations. That some benefit will accrue to the group from legislation, however, seems beyond dispute.

When comparing certified TIs with other translational occupations, the situation of certified TIs under Spanish law is no doubt advantageous. Spanish law stipulates that individual citizens must seek the service of certified TIs whenever they need to produce official documents originally written in foreign languages. Exclusive jurisdiction is therefore granted. However, when the court service has to provide translation and interpreting services for citizens (for example, in criminal proceedings and police stations), the relevant law (Spanish Law on Criminal Procedure) establishes the court's discretion to appoint an ad hoc TI based on a person's statement of language proficiency. Also, parties in civil cases (under Spanish Law on Civil Procedure) may seek ad hoc appointments by the court. In the end, the most common practice is not to hire certified TIs whenever the public budget is at stake. Instead, the service is tendered on an annual basis and the lowest bidder will take responsibility for offering translation and interpreting services within any given field. Clearly economic capital is given prime importance rather than cultural capital, that is, the technical basis that grants a group distinction. In civil cases, however, the most common practice is to seek expert certified TIs (subject to legal liability); economic capital may also be considered relevant, but cultural

capital is the primary factor taken into account in the selection of someone to do the job. We can therefore establish that cultural authority is conferred to certified TIs by independent legal professionals when advising their clients on what to do.

Within the Spanish legal context, there are also agents with similar precautionary and preventive security functions who are protected by favorable regulations that guarantee their independence (purported to be key to their neutrality) and allow them to promote regulations affecting their own jurisdiction. More recently, this has allowed Spanish notaries public to assume competences for certifying the faithfulness of translations from the languages they may know.

### **Certified TIs versus court TIs**

The situation of court translation in Spain, as it has been presented, can be defined neither as ideal nor as one in which a single exclusive jurisdiction is prevalent. Since the legal reform of 2001, laws on criminal and civil procedure allow judges wide discretion to appoint ad hoc court TIs. The current set of relevant legal instruments allows for ambiguity in interpretation, which in turn has promoted the increasing coexistence of, and competition among, three different occupational groups within the same jurisdiction (previously the almost exclusive preserve of certified TIs): a bureaucratic occupational group, consisting of TIs working as civil servants for the court; a licensed occupational group, consisting of certified TIs seeking to work for the court; and a free occupational group, consisting of anyone who wishes to work as a TI for the courts, mostly through a third party mediator (who bade at a public tender). These three groups have shared and continue to share this jurisdiction despite the claims of certified TI associations, which are trying to increase rewards for TIs (in different types of capital), and the micro-resistance of rank-and-file professionals and, to a lesser extent, of academic scholars.

In addition to this certainly diverse arena, some court districts assign translation and interpreting services to the lowest bidder, and for bidders to make a profit, customary translation and interpreting fees are far too high. As a consequence, micro-resistance struggles have been triggered, and most certified TIs refuse to work in the courts because they consider the rewards both economically and socially unacceptable. In addition, working conditions in police stations often fail to satisfy professional TI standards due to the lack of relevant information, of social consideration, and even of personal security for the interpreter. Two main consequences have been derived from this situation. First, social claims have arisen. There are doubts as to whether due process of law is being observed in several cases, and indeed a European survey would suggest the contrary; additionally, a number of newspaper articles and

papers on the interpretation services for the Madrid 2004 terrorist attack proceedings highlighted several problems with how interpretation and translation are being dealt with in court. As a result of this, two conflicts have emerged. The first results from a disparity between the social capital possessed (and felt to be possessed) by certified TIs and the symbolic capital effectively assigned to it by the court service. The second is the result of a growing tension between due process of law and market dynamics. These have led to a situation in which a vacancy has emerged.

As a consequence, a new group has emerged claiming its own jurisdiction over the task of court TI. The new occupational group is made up of members of the three subgroups which had up to now shared and disputed the court interpreting market. The first subgroup consists of diverse and limited in-house staff (civil servants); the second consists of some certified TIs who still work for the courts; and the third, of non-qualified workers, hired by public contractors. There is not even homogeneity within the first subgroup, since rewards vary from region to region (wages are higher in the Basque Country, Madrid and the Canary Islands, lower in Andalusia, and even lower in the rest of regions).

However, in 2007, this group institutionalized their perception of themselves as an occupational group by founding the first Spanish Court Translators and Interpreters Association (APTIJ, <http://www.aptij.es/>). Their first action as an association was to found a new mailing list, different from that of certified TIs, and also hosted at Yahoo Groups. The success of this mailing list was rather limited (with only 47 members) and their first steps were aimed at the Government and court service; they voiced traditional professional claims relative to access and training, wages, and working conditions. As would have been expected, the pattern previously established by certified TIs influenced their actions. Jurisdictional regulation had served as the chief means by which certified TIs had established its jurisdiction, and it was also to be the first claim of the newly formed group.

At the same time, information about the association was mass-mailed through professional and academic mailing lists. At that time, membership requirements were fairly restrictive, and only those already working for the courts, either as in-house or freelance TIs, were eligible. Moreover, freelancers had to fulfill an additional condition; they had to be university graduates. We may therefore infer that cultural authority was also relevant for this new group despite the fact that the technical basis of membership was defined by the level of studies reached and not by their content or the specific skills acquired.

In early 2009, the group modified its bylaws and the name of the organization was changed to the Spanish Court and Sworn [Certified] Translators and Interpreters Association (its website address and acronym, however, were not changed). On February 21, 2009, they held their first professional seminar on basic notions

of Criminal and Procedural Law for court translators and interpreters, thereby demonstrating an interest in developing a shared body of knowledge, though legal skills were privileged. This work to accumulate cultural capital was preceded and has been reinforced by efforts to develop social closure. Requirements for entrance are more flexible, though still strict. To become eligible for membership, one of the following criteria must be satisfied:

- a. One must currently be working as a staff court TI.
- b. One must be a certified TI and be a practicing certified TI at the time of applying for membership.
- c. One must have worked as a freelance court TI for the courts on a continual basis.

In cases *a* and *c*, the applicant must also hold a university degree. Recently, a fourth possibility was added:

- d. One must have developed a research and/or teaching career in legal, sworn or judicial translation or interpreting.

Investment in social capital has also been one of the first actions of the newly founded association. Their administrators have addressed personal invitations to in-house court TIs and have managed to attract a number of professionals. Their members and board participate in conferences whenever they have a chance in order to foster commitment and membership among professionals and academic staff. They have also issued press releases and contributed on-line to several national newspapers on issues affecting their interests, such as the controversy surrounding court interpreting at the trial for the Madrid train bombing on March 11, 2004. In addition, they plan to work with the Spanish authorities to foster recognition and to improve the social status of court TIs as an occupational group. They are therefore engaged in multiple actions in pursuit of public recognition and trust.

To sum up, the Spanish context has recently witnessed the emergence of an occupational group with a professional project, claiming jurisdiction over a task which had been progressively de-professionalized and abandoned by another professional group. Although the emerging group initially followed a strategy of displacement vis-à-vis the remnants of the group that had abandoned the task, they later sought to re-incorporate them into the new jurisdiction. Specialization in a particular area has allowed court TIs to succeed in the jurisdictional struggle with the formerly dominant group — that of certified TIs — although exclusive jurisdiction has still to be obtained from regulatory bodies and social agents.



## Certified TIs versus notaries public

In the Spanish system of professions, notaries public are prestigious figures holding a law degree and having passed a competitive examination in order to join a highly exclusive group. This examination is controlled by the government, although passing it does not grant one a job. Once an individual becomes a notary public, association is compulsory, and their “colleges” or chartered associations make up some of the most powerful professional entities within the legal system. They perform their services privately although they are considered to be of public interest; as previously mentioned, notaries public are assigned a precautionary and preventive security function in the Spanish legal system. They act as intermediary bodies to guarantee that the parties to any agreement sign the relevant documents with full knowledge of the details they contain and of any legal formalities they must to fulfil, or that any other relevant legal instrument is executed according to the law. The purpose is to reduce litigation in court by assuring that the correct procedure has been followed. The task of this group is protected by binding legislation, and the code of practice presently in force can be traced back to 1944. Although several modifications have been enacted, the one passed in 2007 (Ministry of Justice 2007) is particularly relevant to our purposes.

This case is completely different from the previous one. In this case, the group competing with the certified TIs is dominant. The technical basis for distinction is clear, and cultural authority and legitimation have been established over a long period of time. On the one hand, cultural capital has been promoted through training (degree in law), ongoing education (organized both by universities and chartered associations), and research. On the other hand, social capital has been accrued by notaries for centuries through political and cultural influence, close links to economic and political elites, and a privileged position among the social classes. Legitimation and trust are among the resources of this legal profession and they are safeguarded by measures focusing on social closure, such as an examination as an entrance barrier to the profession, high standards, codes of practice (1944), and a strong association with disciplinary powers.

Overlap in the roles of certified TIs and notaries public occurs when foreign citizens need to have notaries write their documents, or when foreign citizens produce documents in languages which are not official and known to the individual notary public. In this case an official translation or interpretation is needed and certified TIs are the agents in charge of this function. In fact, for most certified TIs this is a sector of the market where fees are highly satisfactory, deadlines and task complexity are reasonable, and interaction is usually carried out without great difficulty.

The conflict however, seems to exist for notaries public, who seem to prefer not to hire and pay certified TIs to perform translation services, at least in some circumstances. In 2007, a modification was passed in the relevant legislation which assigned notaries the professional competence to sign and seal Spanish versions of documents originally written in languages they declared to be competent in (without the need to provide proof of language proficiency). Also, in the chartered association of notaries public of the Valencian region, an office was created to translate legal documents. The people working in this office were in fact certified TIs, and the chartered association would charge them a fee for every translation they certified (both the certified TI's and the association's fees were paid by the customer).

Although there were certified TIs involved, this was a case of displacement. There was clearly no vacancy and there is still plenty of work for certified TIs in the sector. However, notaries public now have a choice and the jurisdiction of certified TIs has been eroded in this area. Two conflicting occupational groups co-exist, share interests, and have demonstrated different degrees of influence within the system of professions. Now there is a legitimate alternative practice for solving tasks previously assigned to certified TIs. The client can now interact with the notary public and not the certified TI, and the former can either translate the document him or herself or instruct a certified TI to do so, as a subordinate activity. This jurisdiction was claimed and taken over by the dominant group via legislation, something made possible by the dominant group's social capital. In daily practice notaries public have been able to claim jurisdiction over the task of translating thanks to the group's trustworthiness in the eyes of the public.

However, resistance has also been set in motion. Several complaints have been filed by ATIJC against the practice of a chartered institution of notaries public offering translation services to the public, and also against the modification in legislation that now forces certified TIs to share their jurisdiction with notaries. In addition, citizens have filed complaints because of what they consider to be abusive fees charged by the chartered association of Valencian notaries public. When the Catalan association found out about these complaints, they confronted the Valencian chartered association. This dispute has yet to be resolved, and the translation office of the Valencian chartered association of notaries public is still operating. The challenge to the dominant group, however, has nothing to do with the technical knowledge traditionally leveraged by professional groups to claim jurisdiction over a task. No emphasis has been put on training or the body of knowledge probably because there is no clear consensus among certified TIs and their associations as to what lies at the heart of their task (legal, linguistic, or translational knowledge). On the contrary, it is economic and social capital that are being wielded and invested.

## Some conclusions

In the two cases that have been reviewed, different strategies were pursued by groups with highly diverse occupational profiles, which in turn produced different outcomes. In the first conflict between certified TIs and court TIs, distinction and legitimation were not consolidated in the first group and were only an aspiration for the second. Strategies to create new boundaries focused on organizing, achieving social closure, sharing knowledge, and setting common goals for professionalization. The jurisdiction at stake was, in fact, an emerging vacancy in the professional labor market. In this case, legislation was not initially sought, although it is now a goal of the newly founded association. In the second case a group with high levels of social capital and trust managed to pass legislation beneficial to their interests and this decided the struggle in their favor. Social capital seems to be a key ingredient in these jurisdictional struggles, with legislation representing milestones in the process of widening or restricting jurisdiction.

Moreover, both in the reform of procedural law and in the modification of legislation affecting notaries public, a clear outcome was reduced costs. Placing economic capital at the forefront indicates how the dominant group perceives the balance of capitals within the dominated group. The social and cultural capitals (with which TIs may work to change their situation or how translation and interpreting should be done) were not considered to pose any challenge to the established situation and domination of the labor market.

Changes in structure, however, did trigger changes in the system of professions. The strategies used in these two cases have led to the creation of new boundaries and different non-consolidated jurisdictions. Jurisdictional regulation has made notaries eligible to perform new tasks although they are shared with certified TIs; and finding and filling a vacancy has professionalized a task and created a new division of labor within the translational occupations.

As a whole, the legal field has proved to exert a dominant influence over the field of translation, and social capital and regulation have proved to be effective weapons in jurisdictional struggles. This provides translators and interpreters the opportunity to see the importance of coordinating the internal stratification of translational occupations in order to cooperate in the accumulation of capital. This will be a necessary strategy for status improvement and greater professionalization.

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# Effectiveness of translator certification as a signaling device

Views from the translator recruiters\*

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In recent years, the issue of translator certification has attracted a great deal of attention among professional translators and translation studies scholars. Using the economic theory of signaling as a framework and an experiment involving the use of fictitious resumes, this study entailed interviews with eight translator recruiters in Hong Kong. The ranking of the resumes and the critical textual analysis of the eight transcribed interviews show the importance of formal educational qualifications and relevant work experience in the screening of resumes. Most interviewees viewed translator certification as an “add-on” and preferred an academic degree to translator certification. To some extent, this is due to inadequate knowledge and misconceptions about the process of translator certification. Hence, it is suggested that translation companies and translator training institutions/professional translator associations should engage in coordinated efforts to develop multilateral signaling mechanisms.

**Keywords:** translator certification, translation profession, signaling, fictitious resumes, translator recruiters

## Introduction

In recent years, the issue of translator certification has attracted a great deal of attention among professional translators and translation studies scholars. Many countries, especially those in Asia, have developed or are in the process of developing their own translator certification systems. Even more mature certification systems offered by well-established professional translator associations (e.g., the American Translators Association [ATA] and the Chartered Institute of Linguists [IoL], United Kingdom) have introduced a number of new initiatives such as mandatory continuing education requirements to further develop the existing system.

Some people support the idea of professional certification, stating that it is a stage of professionalization. For instance, Shanahan, Meehan and Mogge (1994: iii) point out that one of the possible definitions of professionalization can be “the process of using education and certification to enhance the quality of performance of those within the occupation field.” Others mock it as “alphabet soup” (Dale 1999; Stephenson 2002), as the sheer number of designations has created confusion among employers and service buyers.

Since the terms “certification,” “accreditation,” “licensure,” and “registration” can cause confusion, clearer definitions might be useful before any further discussion takes place. In fact, Schmitt (1995) has noted that there is frequent misuse of the terms. For example, “registered” nurses are in fact licenced, as are “Certified Public Accountants.” She remarks that certification is a form of title protection and recognition to individuals who have met predetermined requirements.

Stejskal (2003) further clarifies the difference between certification and accreditation by stating that certification is a voluntary process by which an organization grants recognition to an *individual* while accreditation is a process by which an entity grants public recognition to an *organization*.

## Theoretical Framework

The economic theory of signaling acts as the guiding force behind this research. In economics, a signal is a message that a seller sends to a buyer that conveys credible information about quality. Signaling theory was first proposed by Michael Spence (1973, 1974), who applied it to the job market. He suggested that prospective employees possess two types of attributes: unalterable observed attributes (e.g., age and gender) and alterable attributes (e.g., level of education). Those alterable attributes are signals subject to change at the initiative of the individual. In fact, since modern times when education was institutionalized, education and the academic qualifications and credentials that result have long served as signals for organizations that make hiring decisions. Because employers do not have a real measure of the knowledge, skills and attitudes of job applicants, they use academic qualification and other credentials as signals for making inferences regarding missing information (Barber 1998).

Since corporations do not have a more accurate estimate of the future employability of an employee, they may make the assumption that a potential employee who has a higher level of education possesses the qualities that may imply higher productivity. According to Benjamin, Gunderson and Riddell (1988:322), employers use education to signal “unobserved ability” when screening employees. The signaling theories argue that individuals with higher ability are more likely

to obtain higher levels of education than those with lower ability. This suggests that the level of education attainment is a reflection of the inherent abilities of the individuals.

In the translation market, an academic qualification attained by completing a translation program may be a possible signal to denote a translator's quality. More than a decade ago, Caminade and Pym (1995) listed at least 250 university-level organizations in over 60 countries offering four-year undergraduate degrees and/or graduate courses in translation. There are now many more translation programs offered by translator training institutions in different parts of the world. According to the list of ATA-approved translation and interpreting schools (American Translators Association 2009), there are 539 educational institutions offering translation and interpreting courses in 73 countries, ranging from Algeria to Zimbabwe. This shows that the number of university-level translation and interpreting programs has more than doubled in the past decade.

On the other hand, translator certification may also be viewed as a signal of good translators. As pointed out by Stejskal (2003), there are three possible situations in which the certification process may be carried out in the field of translation: (1) certification by a professional association, (2) certification by a government, and (3) certification by an academic institution. He has discussed all three possibilities and aptly stated that "Certification by a professional association is strongest in common law countries, whereas certification by a government body is usually employed in civil law countries." (100–101) The discussion in this paper mainly refers to the certification process carried out by professional associations.

## Research Design

An experiment with the use of fictitious resumes was used to investigate the hiring behaviors of translator recruiters in Hong Kong. The aim was to examine the signaling power of translator certification. The experiment resembles Bartlett's (2004) research on the signaling influence of occupational certification in the automobile service and information technology industries in the United States. Research using a similar experimental approach and fictitious resumes to explore the signaling power of various parameters in the hiring process emerged as early as the mid-1970s (e.g., Dipboye, Fromkin, and Wilback 1975). An innovative use of fictitious resumes in recent years is the research of Bertrand and Mullainathan (2003) to measure racial discrimination in the labor market in the United States. A number of fictitious resumes were designed and sent in response to more than 1,300 job advertisements in Boston and Chicago. A record was kept of the number of telephone callbacks or email replies sent to an answering machine or email



account listed for each fictitious resume. The experiment results showed a significant negative discrimination effect against African-American-sounding names; Caucasian-sounding names received 50% more callbacks or email responses for interviews. These studies show that the use of fictitious resumes as a research instrument may generate interesting and useful insights about the recruiting behaviors in job market.

In this research, a series of fictitious resumes was developed using popular guidebooks for job seekers in Hong Kong (Chen 1997; Lam 2002) and 20 authentic resumes of translators collected by the researcher. These were then revised in consultation with a number of translator recruiters and translation teachers. The final 12 typical resumes represented applicants who differed in educational/professional qualifications and years of job experience. Other known variables that may influence the hiring process (including, but not limited to, age and gender) were either omitted or controlled.

The variables used in this study are briefly discussed here. The dependent variable is the perceived suitability for employment in the respondent's firm. Translator recruiters are first asked if the individual represented by the resume would be suitable for the post of a translator in the respondent's organization. Second, managers are asked what additional educational or professional qualifications the applicant would need in order to be considered hireable.

The independent variables in this study are educational/professional qualifications and level of previous work experience. There are four categories for educational/professional qualifications. The fictitious resumes represent applicants with and without translator certification and with and without a bachelor's degree in English. (A bachelor's degree in Translation is deliberately not used in order to elicit responses about whether an applicant with a degree in English or Translation is more employable.) To be more specific, the four treatment conditions are: (1) neither professional translator certification nor university degree in English; (2) professional translator certification but no university degree in English; (3) university degree in English but no professional certification; and (4) both professional translator certification and university degree in English. Previous work experience is the other independent variable used in this study. Levels of previous work experience are: (1) no work experience; (2) 3 years or less (fewer than 35 months); (3) more than 3 years but less than 8 years of translation experience.

Treatment variables are those that are manipulated on the fictitious resumes. In this study, they are considered to be the absence, presence, or combination of the two independent variables mentioned above. The combination of variables translates into 12 variations, representing 12 different resumes and this is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Variables and cell analysis matrix for fictitious resumes<sup>1</sup>

1	2	3	4	5	6
Qualifications: Secondary School Cert.	Qualifications: Secondary School Cert.	Qualifications: Secondary School Cert.	Qualifications: Degree in English	Qualifications: Degree in English	Qualifications: Degree in English
Experience: None	Experience: Less than 3 years	Experience: 3–8 years	Experience: None	Experience: Less than 3 years	Experience: 3–8 years
7	8	9	10	11	12
Qualifications: IoL's Diploma in Translation	Qualifications: IoL's Diploma in Translation	Qualifications: IoL's Diploma in Translation	Qualifications: Degree in English and IoL's	Qualifications: Degree in English and IoL's	Qualifications: Degree in English and IoL's
Experience: None	Experience: Less than 3 years	Experience: 3–8 years	Experience: None	Experience: Less than 3 years	Experience: 3–8 years

The respondents for my experimental study are the persons who are responsible for hiring translators in translation companies in Hong Kong. ProZ, TranslatorsCafe and Yellow Pages Hong Kong were used to approximate a population for sampling. A stratified sampling of managers responsible for hiring freelance translators was drawn up, including companies of various sizes.

The semi-structured interview method was used to collect data. A semi-structured interview is a means of collecting qualitative data by setting up a situation that allows a respondent the time and scope to talk about their opinions on a particular subject. Open-ended questions are used to elicit the respondent's point of view.

Interview participants are first asked to read and sign a consent form. They are then required to complete a short form intended to gather facts about their personal background and the characteristics of their firm. The one-on-one interview begins with a description of the interview structure. The interviewees, all of them translator recruiters, are then asked to imagine that their firm has advertised the position of a translator. The ad appeared in a newspaper or on a website. In response, they have received 12 resumes. No cover letter or other information is provided about the applicants. They are required to rank the resumes from 1 to 12 in order of suitability for the job of a translator in their company.

After the most suitable candidate has been chosen, respondents are asked: (1) What characteristics of this resume appeal to you? (2) What specific features of the resume indicate to you that this person would be suitable for the job of a translator in your firm? (3) How do these characteristics make the applicant the most suitable for the job?

The resumes are then set aside and managers are asked to consider a hypothetical situation wherein they are considering two applicants identical in every way except for the educational/professional qualification. One applicant is described as holding a university degree in English language and no professional translator certification. The other applicant holds professional translator certification but no university degree. This question seeks to provide an additional direct measure of the signaling power of the two educational/professional qualifications under study. “Experience” is also included in the resumes in order to elicit the respondents’ views on the variable.

To determine the appropriateness of the fictitious resumes and the research design, a pilot test was conducted in January 2007. Two translator recruiters were selected. They were asked to provide detailed feedback on each resume and the research method.

## Research findings

### *Characteristics of the Sample*

A total of eight interviews were conducted between February and April 2007 in Hong Kong. The interviewees were asked to provide a brief description of their background and the hiring behaviors of their companies or organizations. The data are tabulated in Table 2.

The sample provides a relatively diversified reflection of the translation market in Hong Kong. Interviewees are senior and management personnel working in a number of organizational contexts, including a multinational translation corporation, a small-sized translation company, a textbook and dictionary publisher, a legal publisher and a university press.

Although all interviews were carried out in Hong Kong, half of the respondents stated that most of their business was conducted in countries or regions other than Hong Kong/China. Of the four corporations in this sub-sample, two are indeed multinational translation companies. One is a New York Stock Exchange-listed provider of print and related services, and the other is among the top fifteen language service providers in the world in revenue (Beninatto and DePalma 2007). In fact, the remaining two companies, which give the US and US/UK as their countries of operation, are also major players in their respective fields (legal and financial information provider and education, business information and consumer publishing) and are listed companies in London and New York, respectively.

The data provided by the sample are believed to be reliable, as the mean number of years the interviewees are employed in their current position is 6.73,

Table 2. Background of the respondents and hiring characteristics of their companies

Item	Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2	Interviewee 3	Interviewee 4	Interviewee 5	Interviewee 6	Interviewee 7	Interviewee 8
Nature of each respondent's company	Textbook and dictionary publishing	Legal publishing	Textbook and dictionary publishing	Textbook publishing	Small-sized translation company	Large multi-national translation company	Large multi-national translation company	University press
Job title	Publishing Director	Product Development Director	Head and Editor-in-Chief	Assistant Managing Director	Project Director	Supervisor (Asia)	Client Relationship Manager	Senior Course Designer
Years in current position	6	2	7	2	18	5	10 months	13
Years of hiring translators	6	4	12	6	18	5	NA	10
Country of operation	US	US/UK	China	Hong Kong	Hong Kong, China	Global (mainly Asia)	Switzerland	Hong Kong, China
Number of in-house translators	5	1	0	Everyone needs to be involved	2 full-time, 8 part-time	0	1 (local); 2 (regional)	3
Number of freelancers	No exact number (on project basis)	5	20	5	0	>700	>200	25

ranging from less than one year (the Swiss company that Interviewee 7 works in started its Asian operation in 2007; he left his previous translation firm and joined this company ten months ago) to eighteen years. Seven of the eight respondents have experience in hiring translators. The mean number of years of hiring is 8.71. Therefore, we can say that the interviewees are experienced both professionally and in hiring translators. They should have a relatively good understanding of the general translation market or at least of their particular translation segment (e.g., textbook publishing and legal book publishing).

### *Ranking of Fictitious Resumes*

In order to illustrate the respondents' rank order preference for the 12 resumes, a calculation of the frequency with which each resume was ranked first was conducted. The unit of analysis for this question was each resume, and the frequency with which it was ranked first by each respondent. The results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Frequency table of the resumes ranked in first place

Resume	Characteristics of applicant	Frequency
12	Qualifications: Degree in English and certification from professional translators association Experience: 5 years	4
11	Qualifications: Degree in English and certification from professional translators association Experience: Less than 3 years	2
6	Qualifications: Degree in English Experience: 5 years	2

From the above table, we can see that there is a strong preference for the person represented by Resume 12. Perhaps this is not surprising, as the resume presented arguably the "strongest" applicant, one who has both a degree and certification from a professional translators' association, and five years of work experience. Four of the eight respondents (interviewees 1, 6, 7 and 8), two of them from the large multinational translation companies, ranked this resume in first place. However, two others (interviewees 3 and 5) chose Resume 6 and two (interviewees 2 and 4) chose Resume 11. Resume 6 represents an applicant with an English degree and five years of experience but no translator certification.

To distinguish better among the individual factors (academic qualification, translator certification and relevant work experience), the ranking preference for four selected resumes — Resume 1 (secondary-school certificate only and no

experience), Resume 4 (degree in English with no experience), Resume 7 (certification from professional translators association but no experience), and Resume 12 (degree in English, certification from professional translators association and five years' experience) — is singled out for discussion below.

Resume 1, reflecting an applicant with no higher education qualifications (neither certification from a professional translators association nor a university degree) and no relevant previous work experience, was singled out as the least suitable by the majority of respondents. For this resume, 87.5% of the respondents ranked it in the bottom three places (tenth to twelfth place). The remaining respondent (Interviewee 5) even stated strongly that he would not consider this applicant at all.

Resume 4 represents an applicant with a university degree in English but no relevant previous work experience. Half of the respondents placed this resume in the middle position (sixth place), and most of the remaining respondents indicated that the person with this resume was not suitable for a job with their company (ninth and tenth places). An English degree alone, without any work experience, had very little support for a top ranking. In fact, in the interview, almost all interviewees mentioned the importance of relevant professional translation experience.

The ranking distribution of Resume 7, reflecting an applicant with translator certification but no relevant experience, is skewed towards the less suitable end as 87.5% of the respondents placed this resume in ninth to eleventh place. This suggests in general that persons responsible for hiring translators still prefer an applicant with a university degree to one with translator certification.

Resume 12 represented the “strongest” applicant, who offers an English degree, translator certification and relevant work experience. Four respondents ranked this resume in first place and four ranked it second. Therefore, we can say that this applicant was considered the most suitable by the respondents.

Because it is the objective of this research to examine the signaling power of translator certification, the preference for translator certification is compared to the preference for a university degree after controlling for experience. Those resumes that presented applicants with equal levels of experience but differing educational credentials were compared. In fact, all except one respondent preferred the applicant with an English degree over the one with translator certification. The respondent who had a preference for translator certification instead of an English degree in both cases was Interviewee 5, the Project Director of a small-sized translation company. The rationale behind the respondents' choices is explored in the follow-up interviews.

*Qualitative Analysis of Transcribed Interview Data*

The eight interviews were carried out and recorded with the prior consent of the interviewees. Seven were conducted in Cantonese and one was in English, as the interviewee was a non-Chinese speaking expatriate working in Hong Kong. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim. Those conducted in Cantonese were translated into English for easier computer searching of terms and phrases needed for analysis. Each interview transcript was then read critically and analyzed for common themes.

Rather than analyzing the responses to each question, the answers to three meta-level issues were explored in the transcripts. The benefit of this approach is that a respondent may add valuable insights on a particular issue in answer to a number of questions. By examining the entire interview transcript, a deeper understanding can be gained of a respondent's attitude towards the signaling power of translator certification. Consequently, the analysis was conducted and results organized in answer to these two questions: (1) What do you look for in a person's resume applying for the post of translator? (2) What do education, certification and work experience signal?

All interview data were read critically several times, in order to identify references to academic qualifications and other qualities that are sought in job applicants. Four main types of response emerged from the data and were categorized as follows: (1) formal/traditional educational qualifications, (2) translator certification, (3) relevant previous experience, and (4) personal qualities and other factors.

Each of the eight interviewees made at least one specific reference to formal educational qualifications as playing a role in their ranking decisions. Within the context of this study, the "formal/traditional education qualification" referred to is a university degree in English.

Quite a number of respondents pointed out that possessing a university degree is a basic requirement for translators they intend to hire. Interviewee 8 said that this is the policy of her organization: "The first thing I would look for is academic qualification. Since we are an educational institute, we must choose someone with a university degree. We need to abide by the policy of our school".

Two respondents also said that they mainly consider university graduates because nowadays in Hong Kong there are a lot of universities and the total number of university students has increased drastically in the past two decades: "To be frank, if people cannot get into a university, their academic results must be really bad. If they finish Form 5 [equivalent to General Certificate of Secondary Education in the UK] or Form 7 [equivalent to General Certificate of Education Advanced Level in the UK] and do not further their studies, their school results must be unsatisfactory and their command of languages cannot be good. We would

first screen out this batch of applicants and then look at those who are university graduates" (Interviewee 4).

Many respondents said that the most important characteristic in their top-ranked resume was the presence of an English degree and that the degree is the important criterion for determining applicant suitability. For example, Interviewee 8 stated: "We usually will consider people with an English degree" and this was supported by Interviewee 1 who said: "Their major should be related to language. English is our major [consideration]. It can be English literature, contemporary English, English for professional communication or similar subjects" (Interviewee 1). In addition, the interviewee moved on to emphasize that she "would not consider applicants with majors in physics or chemistry, even if they have a lot of experience." This view might be somewhat non-typical as the interviewee is the Director of Bilingual Dictionaries and Home Education and no technical translation is involved in her job. An applicant with a major in science may be highly suitable for the post of a scientific translator. In fact, Interviewee 2, who is the Product Development Director of a law publisher, stated that his company would prefer to have graduates from a law school not a language department.

"Translator certification" was the second category investigated. Respondents indicated that translator certification made applicants more suitable for employment. However, when given a choice, 75% of the respondents said that they preferred an English degree to translator certification. After further investigation, it seems that in some cases this is due to the respondents' ignorance or misconception of translator certification.

Interviewee 4 quite frankly admitted her ignorance of the various professional translator associations, even though she had been hiring translators for eight years. She said, "In fact, I am not well acquainted with the various professional translator associations." However, despite her apparent ignorance, she gave some rather constructive comments on what these associations should require their members to do: "When someone joins [a professional translator association], I may question whether he or she just needs to pass a simple examination. If there are requirements in addition to an examination, for example, the prospective member also needs to have substantial work experience, I think the qualification will be better recognized" (Interviewee 4). This comment shows that the respondent did not have an accurate understanding of translator certification. In order to become a member of the Chartered Institute of Linguists, which is one of the more accepted translator certifications in Hong Kong, one needs (1) a degree and at least three years' professional experience involving foreign-language skill, or (2) a proven post-graduate qualification and at least one year of professional experience with a similar foreign language requirement (Chartered Institute of Linguists



2009). Alternatively, translators wanting to join the Institute may take one of the examinations offered. These examinations do not require a university degree for entry. These data have been utilized in the design of fictitious resumes.

Another respondent revealed the grave misconception that the only requirement to become a member of the Chartered Institute of Linguists is to pay a membership fee: “For Chartered Institute of Linguists, basically you just need to pay to register. Therefore, it is not a good reference point [for considering job applicants]” (Interviewee 7). This response is quite astonishing, as this interviewee is the Client Relationship Manager of a large multinational translation company based in Switzerland, a company with over 200 freelance translators.

The only interviewee that seemed to have a good understanding of translator certification was Interviewee 5, the Project Director (and in fact the owner) of a small-sized translation company, who preferred an applicant with translator certification to one with an English degree, *ceteris paribus*. He quite correctly pointed out that: “[If the applicant] is a member of Chartered Institute of Linguists, this shows that he has done some hard work. You can view it as a degree-equivalent qualification” (Interviewee 5). This is true, at least in Hong Kong. According to the Education Bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, “the FDEC [Final Diploma in English and Chinese] / MIL [Member of the Institute of Linguists] qualification is considered as a degree equivalent qualification for language-related jobs in the Civil Service in Hong Kong” (Education Bureau of HKSAR Government 2007).

The third category that emerged from the interview data was titled “work experience.” All transcribed interviews had respondents making at least one specific reference to looking for previous work experience in making decisions on hiring translators. Because of the number of references to work experience and the diversity of opinions on the importance of this factor in ranking resumes, the textual analysis was broken down into three sub-themes to find related patterns of responses.

The first sub-theme indicated that managers were clearly looking for resumes that described applicants with relevant work experience obtained in previous positions. Interviewee 2 explained how he ranked the resumes: “We ... look at work experience, work experience that is very relevant to our industry [legal publishing]. So [the applicants with relevant industry experience] should have received quite high marks for related experience, whether or not they have the professional qualification” (Interviewee 2).

The second sub-theme related to experience was the amount of experience. One respondent (Interviewee 8) stated that three years of experience is the minimum for her organization. Also, the respondents in general believed that the

more years of experience, the more employable the applicant. According to an interviewee: “Experience is the most important thing to a translator. As you do more translation, it is natural that you’ll make progress. So, when you have worked in the translation field for a longer time, things would become much smoother. Therefore, when the backgrounds [of applicants] are similar, I would definitely choose one with more years of experience” (Interviewee 1). This interviewee indeed chose the job applicant who had 5 years of experience, the one represented by Resume 12.

Another sub-theme to emerge was freelance experience. One of the interviewees voiced his concern over how to count the number of years of freelance experience: “Some people claim that they have freelance experience. I would be cautious about this. The reason is that everyone can work freelance. Some only translate one piece every year and others work really hard from nine to five to earn a living. Sometimes it is difficult to judge” (Interviewee 5). Some employers find it necessary to resort to their own written test to screen out applicants, as discussed in the next section.

The fourth and final category of themes related to what hiring managers seek is labeled “personal qualities and other factors.” Probably because almost everyone can claim to be a translator and take up translation work, one interviewee emphasized that it is important for translators to have a sense of responsibility: “In the [job] interview, we need to look at whether the applicant has a sense of responsibility, as this will also affect the [translation] quality..... It is also important to understand the individuals, whether their personality is suitable for the position” (Interviewee 6). Another interviewee pointed out that persistence is another important quality he prefers in translators: “[Another] condition is that he should have persistence in his translation work. In other words, he has to be in the profession for an extended time, not just have fragmented experience in translation” (Interviewee 5).

Quite a number of recruiters emphasized the importance of written tests. One even emphasized twice that written tests are the most “critical” factor in her hiring decision. And Interviewee 8 provided the reason why written tests are needed: “The applicants need to take a written test so that we can be certain that the [chosen] one is the one we need... We require the test because they need to show us that they can fulfill the needs of our organizational culture and the nature of the jobs they’ll be required to do” (Interviewee 8). Interviewee 6 provided more information about how these translation tests were carried out. She said that the tests would be domain-specific: “At first, I would see what kind of translator we are looking for. Which industry is the translator for? If we look for a financial translator, we will ask the applicants to do a written test related to finance. If we

need some telecommunication translators, the written test will be about telecommunication. We also need to look at the language pair. Is it Chinese into English or English into Chinese? Or is it for another language pair?" (Interviewee 6). In addition, she also emphasized that the tests would be administered within a specific time limit: "We would need the applicants] to complete the test within a time limit. [The reason is that if] someone completes a test in two to three days and another one spends three hours, the quality will be very different. Therefore ... we would require them to finish the test in a specific time limit" (Interviewee 6). The interviewee did not further explain whether the test would be delivered online or the applicants would need to come to her office to take the test. As this interviewee works in a multinational translation company, it is quite likely that the test is sent through email. How to ensure that the job applicants actually complete the test within that time limit or do the test by themselves are potential problems. The recruiters' great reliance on internal written tests may once again show that academic qualification, translator certification, and work experience cannot suffice as reputable signals when recruiters make hiring decisions.

Having established what managers are looking for in the resumes when screening for translators, the analysis moved on to examine what an English degree, translator certification and work experience signal. An English degree appeared as a signal in many different ways. The three themes to emerge signal that the applicant with an English degree has received professional training, has foundation knowledge in linguistics and demonstrates a better language standard than non-graduates. The first theme reflected comments relating to the signaling ability of an English degree in providing students with professional training: "If they have a degree in language, it shows that they have received professional training" (Interviewee 4). However, the interviewee did not elaborate on what kind of professional training was included. The second theme related to the signal sent by the English degree holders was that they possess a theoretical foundation of linguistic knowledge that is relevant to the field of translation. According to some interviewees, the third signal is that, compared with non-university graduates, university-degree holders are generally more capable linguistically: "In general, university-degree holders have a better language standard than Form 5 or Form 7 graduates do" (Interviewee 4).

However, one interviewee indicated that an English degree can also send negative signals: "Their English is very good but their Chinese standard might be far from satisfactory. If we need them to translate from English into Chinese, there may be a problem," and if there were a choice, they would choose "one with a major in Translation" (Interviewee 4). This view was echoed by Interviewee 7, who said, "Our company is inclined to find a candidate with a degree with Translation."

Most interviewees indicated that certification could be an “additional” factor in their hiring decision, but it did not give a strong signal regarding the suitability of applicants. As discussed, this is in part due to the recruiters’ partial understanding of the certification process. Interviewee 5, the only respondent in this survey with a relatively good understanding of translator certification, said that translator certification signals perseverance: “He is a Member of the Chartered Institute of Linguists. I can see that he has consistency... or persistence. It shows that he is likely to stay in the translation field and not just work for a short while” (Interviewee 5).

Work experience was seen as conveying information about the suitability of an applicant. Unlike the analysis of the signals sent by academic qualification and translator certification, only two themes emerged to describe the types of signal sent by previous work experience. Work experience was seen as signaling that the job applicants have “hands-on” and “real” practice in translation: “[Regarding this job applicant], [he] has more than two years of work experience. He has some real experience in translation” (Interviewee 4). Another interviewee stated that work experience provided a stronger signal to her than did education: “I would think that this applicant with only Form 5 education is better than another, with Form 7.... In fact, he has freelance translation experience. He has some contact with authentic translation work. To me, although he has two less years of education... Experience is more important than two more years of schooling” (Interviewee 1). However, it should be pointed out that, in the later part of the interview, this interviewee contradicted herself by saying: “I divided the resumes into two piles, one of university graduates and the other one of not university graduates... I think that translator is a job that requires a certain level of education... Therefore, what I really need to do is to rank the six university graduates” (Interviewee 1).

## Conclusion

Although almost all of the interviewees considered work experience an important factor in their hiring decisions, work experience alone cannot sufficiently signal that the applicant possesses sound translation skills and will deliver high-quality translation work. The recruiters need to base their decision on other factors, most often the possession of a relevant university degree. The critical textual analysis of the eight transcribed interviews presented here was designed to provide deeper insight into the attributes that recruiters look for in applicants for the position of translator. They indicate what certain resume features signal and point to attitudes towards education and translator certification. Although a variety of responses were explored, the dominant themes that emerged highlight the importance of

formal educational qualifications and of relevant work experience in the screening of resumes. Most interviewees viewed translator certification as an “add-on,” and preferred an academic degree to translator certification. We consider that this may be due to inadequate knowledge or misconceptions about the process of certification.

In view of this, it appears that translation companies and translator training institutions/professional translator associations would do well to engage in coordinated efforts to develop multilateral signaling mechanisms. For instance, translator training institutions can better tailor continuing professional development programs in consultation with professional bodies, and translation companies can also be consulted on developing academic translation programs so that graduates from such programs may better meet the demands and challenges entailed in their chosen career.

The above efforts may have two results. First, they may help foster trust in an increasingly uncertain translation market, thus alleviating weaknesses in the dissemination of information. Second, translator training institutions and professional translator associations will be more effective in knowledge circulation. The knowledge can be better diffused to all those who may benefit from it, including professional translators, translation companies and other stakeholders. In this way, it will be easier for employers to make inferences about job applicants’ employability and the process of recruiting translators can be easier, cheaper and more time-efficient. Moreover, when equipped with updated knowledge and skills and the required attitudes, translators will be better able to deal with changes occurring in the translation industry.

## Notes

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### 1. Key to Table 1:

#### *Qualifications*

- None: holds neither Chartered Institute of Linguists’ Diploma in Translation nor a degree in English language
- Degree in English: holds a bachelor’s degree in English language only
- IoLs Diploma in Translation: holds a Chartered Institute of Linguists’ Diploma in Translation (w/English as the source language and Chinese as the target language)
- Degree in English and IoLs Diploma in Translation: holds both a bachelor’s degree in English language and a Chartered Institute of Linguists’ Diploma in Translation

### Experience

- No work experience in translation
- Less than 3 years of work experience in translation
- 3–8 years of work experience in translation

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# Conference interpreting

## Surveying the profession

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This paper offers a review of survey research among conference interpreters as a way of gaining knowledge about the profession, including the role perception of individual practitioners. A corpus of 40 survey research studies is examined with regard to such research design issues as sampling and question type, and categorized by topic. The conference interpreter's role emerges as one of the dominant concerns in recent survey research, selected findings from which will be presented.

**Keywords:** survey research, role, sampling, questionnaires, qualitative data

### Introduction

My aim with this paper is to give an overview of survey research on conference interpreting as a way of gaining knowledge about that profession. This “survey of surveys,” with a focus on interpreters’ self-perception of their role, is designed as groundwork toward a state-of-the-art survey on role issues in conference interpreting carried out as part of a larger research project on “Quality in Simultaneous Interpreting” at the Center for Translation Studies of the University of Vienna (see Zwischenberger, in this issue).<sup>1</sup>

My assumption is that if we want to know more about conference interpreting in general, and about conference interpreters’ professional identity, in particular, one rather obvious approach is to ask the individual practitioners. There are of course other options: examining the way the profession is portrayed by its representative bodies (e.g., Diriker 2004; Zwischenberger, in this issue); asking others how they perceive that profession; or examining how interpreters are portrayed in the media, in films or in works of literature (e.g., Andres 2008; Cronin 2009). But most of these are rather indirect, refracted approaches, so the merit of approaching individual professionals directly should be evident.



Admittedly, however, my approach to survey studies, which consists of a meta-analysis of existing research, is also indirect, as it highlights not necessarily the concerns of individual professionals but the interests of survey researchers regarding this profession. So my research question is not “What is interesting or unique about the profession?” but “What have survey researchers been interested in?” And on the whole, my focus for the purpose of this article will be not so much on what these survey researchers have found out as on how they have gone about their research. I will thus present a quantitative as well as qualitative analysis of survey research with an emphasis on methodological issues and on the topics addressed. Aside from the meta-analysis as such, the presentation of actual survey research findings will be limited to the topic of conference interpreters’ perception of their professional role, for which I will cite from work that has not been widely reported to date.

## Methodology

My corpus of survey research among conference interpreters is made up of 40 studies and was compiled from sources known and accessible to me without a more systematic information-gathering effort (such as canvassing colleagues for information or searching relevant databases). The resulting limitations regarding comprehensive coverage are among the methodological problems associated with this study. More fundamentally still, the validity of the corpus-based analysis hinges on an issue that will also emerge as critical in my assessment of the studies under review—that is, defining the survey population.

In the meta-analysis as well as in the individual studies, it must be clear what is meant by “conference interpreter.” In the absence of licensure or similar statutory provisions, researchers cannot easily find a set of necessary and sufficient features to use as inclusion criteria for a given survey. Recourse is usually made to membership status in professional associations, but this may also involve some uncertainty. Beyond AIIC, the International Association of Conference Interpreters, and comparable national-level associations (or NAATI accreditation at conference-interpreter level), there are many professional bodies that are open to translators as well as interpreters, as many practitioners, especially in languages of limited diffusion, may be engaged in either activity to varying degrees. Furthermore, it may be hard to establish even for members of interpreter associations how much of their work is done in conference settings and whether dialogue interpreting in business and other settings should be considered as well. In the corpus under study, most items refer explicitly to conference interpreting, and many can be classified by virtue of the target group, as in the case of AIIC members or interpreters working for organizations such as the United Nations or the European institutions. Even so,

defining a conference interpreter must be acknowledged as a conceptual problem with major methodological implications for survey design.

The same applies to the notion of “survey” itself. I am using the term to refer to a research strategy broadly defined by Colin Robson (1993:40) as the “collection of information in standardized form from groups of people.” This would include test-like studies, which also involve a standardized instrument. One example is the study by Ingrid Kurz (1996), who had 32 conference interpreters complete the State Trait Anxiety Inventory and compared the results to the values established for the test’s reference population. Another is the study on creativity by Marzena Adamczuk (2005), who administered a creativity test and work preference inventory to 26 conference interpreters. The conference interpreters in these studies are definitely surveyed with the use of an instrument. Thus, even though such work is closer to the tradition of psychological experimentation, I have decided to take them into account, even at the risk of opening the floodgates to many other studies involving the questioning or testing of professional interpreters taking part in experimental research. An example of such work, which, however, is not included in my survey of surveys, is the working memory test administered to eleven professional subjects in the study by Minhua Liu (Liu et al. 2004). On the opposite end of the spectrum in terms of standardization, it seems moot whether biographical interviews of a few individuals should come under the notion of survey. Since a life-story approach is viable also for a single individual, studies of this type (e.g., Torikai 2009) have not been included.

Beyond these basic conceptual issues, there are also problems of a practical sort that impact the design of the corpus. The language of publication may be a source of bias: aside from 30 items in English, seven were published in German and one each in French, Spanish, and Chinese. Another source of uncertainty is the type of publication. MA and doctoral theses, a few of which are included, are particularly difficult to handle, despite Daniel Gile’s efforts to list them in the *CI-RIN Bulletin*. Though entries with the keyword “survey” can be found, information about the sample and survey design is not always available.

Mindful of these limitations, I cannot claim my survey of surveys to be exhaustive, and the findings from the quantitative analyses presented below must be viewed with this caveat in mind.

## Corpus Analysis

My data set includes a total of 40 survey studies completed between 1930 and 2008. The distribution over time is far from even, however. Leaving aside the study by Sanz (1930) as an obvious outlier, survey research on conference interpreting is

essentially a thirty-year tradition, beginning in the late 1970s with several papers presented at the Venice Symposium (Anderson 1978; Parsons 1978; Thiéry 1978). What is more, the majority of the survey research reports under review date from the present century, which may reflect the growth in research output in interpreting studies as well as a trend toward increased use of this research approach. At any rate, the fact that survey research has recently gained momentum should make it worthwhile to take stock and engage in some methodological reflection, as offered in the sections below.

### *Survey Types*

In all but a few cases, respondents received the questions in the form of a questionnaire. Though some of these instruments would also include open questions, most studies (85%) are of a quantitative nature.

There are few examples of surveys using both a quantitative and a qualitative approach. In a classic social-science design, Cary Cooper et al. (1982) first conducted 33 interviews before drawing up a questionnaire filled in by 826 respondents. McIlvaine Parsons (1978), on the other hand, conducted interviews with 11 UN interpreters and then drew up a 62-item questionnaire for which he collected only five responses. In either case, the qualitative component is subservient to the quantitative data collection effort.

Clearly, studies centering on qualitative data are few and far between—and literally so, if one considers the distance in time between Jesús Sanz's (1930) pioneering interview-based survey and the study by Erich Feldweg (1996).

### *Sampling*

Given the effort involved in processing verbal interview data compared to that of processing numerically coded responses to a questionnaire, one could expect the preponderance of quantitative surveying to be associated with relatively large samples, at least when compared to those of qualitative studies. Indeed, average sample size for the 40 studies in my corpus is 156.8, but with a huge standard deviation, of 262. The median in this case (46.5) gives a more adequate representation of the data. In fact, the majority of the 40 survey studies have only up to 50 respondents: eleven studies have up to 25 respondents, and twelve have sample sizes between 26 and 50 respondents (Table 1).

As shown in Table 1, only ten studies have more than 100 respondents. These include two internal membership surveys conducted by AIIC, one with 931 respondents (for the year 2004) and the other with 1004 respondents (for 2006). The latter was reported (Neff 2008) together with an identical survey for 2005, with

**Table 1.** Breakdown of sample size

Size	Frequency
< 25	11
26–50	12
51–100	7
101–500	5
> 500	5

573 respondents, which was not included in the present analysis. Indeed, if the two internal AIIC surveys—and another large-scale employment survey by Neff (2001)—are excluded from the analysis, average sample size drops to about 100.

Notwithstanding these statistics, size is not all that matters in assessing the scope of these studies. Sampling clearly emerges as the critical issue. In many cases, the samples cannot be related to a wider population, and little is known (or reported) about how the sample was constituted. Here is one example from Bühler, the most prolific survey researcher in my corpus and widely known for her pioneering study on quality criteria (Bühler 1986).

In one of the earliest quantitative studies, Bühler (1980) merely indicates that her questionnaire (on the role of nonverbal communication) was distributed at the AIIC General Assembly in New York City in March 1979 and at a meeting of the Austrian region of AIIC in May of that year. It is not known how many persons were approached or how many questionnaires distributed. There were a total of 50 respondents, for whom Bühler (1980:44) claims that they form “a worldwide cross-section of the roughly 1450 internationally organized conference interpreters.” Yet there is no information on how many of the 50 respondents (corresponding to roughly 3.5% of the total population) belonged to the international vs the Austrian group. Background questions were kept to a minimum. (Sex and working languages were asked for but not reported.)

While Bühler’s (1980) groundbreaking study on the role of nonverbal communication in conference interpreting therefore suffers from a less than well-defined sample, the latter is still better described than the sample of 47 AIIC members in Bühler’s (1986) famous survey on quality criteria, for which no background data whatsoever were collected.

In these and other studies, the questionnaires were distributed on site during an event. This made a lot of sense a quarter century ago, when the alternative was self-addressed pre-stamped envelopes. The attendance lists of those assemblies might be used to define the target population (assuming a full-population survey, i.e., that everyone present received the questionnaire); but this, too, would limit the study to interpreters attending a given event, with all the bias this entails.

To the extent that we consider conference interpreting an internationally uniform profession (which might be one of the key questions to establish), AIIC members constitute the ideal survey population. There are distinctions between freelance and staff interpreters affiliated with that organization (roughly 9 to 1), and between various regions, that may need to be taken into account; but there is a single body—and a single language—through which conference interpreters worldwide can be reached.

However, the overall population of those who work as conference interpreters is larger than AIIC, and that is where things get difficult, in some countries more than in others. Japan is a striking example in this regard. The country has only ten AIIC members but certainly many more professional interpreters, who tend to be affiliated with and working for large agencies and cannot be found on any publicly available list. China is another case in point. AIIC membership on the Mainland has grown steeply in recent years but is still only at around 30.

Examples of this type of limitation include two small-scale surveys on the topic of directionality. Al-Salman and Al-Khanji (2002), for instance, describe their sample by saying that “A sample of ten professional Arabic-English-Arabic interpreters was chosen for this study” and indicating that “professional” status was defined as a BA degree in any field plus a minimum of five years’ experience working as an interpreter. There is no reference to any membership status or affiliation, with AIIC or otherwise. (AIIC currently has more than 130 members who have Arabic as an A or B language.) The study was presumably done in Amman, Jordan, where the authors work and where five AIIC members currently have their professional domicile. By the same token, the questionnaire-based survey by Anne Martin (2005) among conference interpreters in southern Spain was addressed to only twelve persons. Out of the ten respondents, only two were affiliated with a professional association, in this case the Spanish Association of Conference Interpreters, AICE, though eight were graduates of Spanish degree programs in translation and interpreting.

I am pointing to these examples not in order to criticize the studies in question or their authors but to draw attention to the knotty problem of sampling inherent in most surveys among conference interpreters. On the whole, one can observe that the samples found in survey studies among conference interpreters, which are meant to provide us with a better understanding of the profession, tend to reflect two weaknesses: either they are rather full surveys of very limited (local) populations, or they are based on rather small—and often unsystematic—samples that give very sparse coverage, if any, of the wider population.

## Topics

Categorizing the 40 survey studies in my corpus by topic is not as straightforward as one might wish. Publication titles are not always very explicit, and a number of surveys cover more than one issue, to a greater or a very limited extent. It is therefore difficult to establish an appropriately weighted topic-based breakdown of the corpus, so my quantitative account of the data involves a great deal of qualitative analysis.

**Table 2.** Breakdown by topics

(Main) Topic	Frequency
directionality	8
role	8
professional ecology	7
job satisfaction	7
employment / market	5
quality	3
nonverbal communication	2
personality	2
bilingualism	1
note-taking	1
qualifications	1
specialization	1
terminological tools	1
translating	1

According to my interpretation of the corpus data, the 40 surveys have addressed some fourteen topics, which are listed in Table 2. Somewhat surprisingly, the rather specific issue of *directionality* appears at the top of the list. This is due in part to several small-scale studies on the topic (two of which were mentioned above) but also to the fact that another (relatively small-scale) study, by Hyang-Ok Lim (2003) in Korea, was replicated first for Japanese (Kondo 2005), then by Jungwha Choi (2008) in relation to job satisfaction, and more recently also by Wang Enmian (2008) in a sample of 69 interpreters in China. This is a very promising development, as using the same survey instrument for small-scale surveys in various locations helps overcome the problem of small, non-representative samples, and allows us to explore the variability associated with the professional environment in different languages, countries and cultures. At the same time, this highlights the need for utmost care in questionnaire design, and for a keen awareness of the largely neglected issue of cross-cultural differences in international surveying.

Replication also underlies the ranking for *quality* in the list, even though this highly prominent topic has been addressed, with a focus on quality criteria, by only three surveys among conference interpreters to date (Bühler 1986; Collados Ais 1998; Chiaro and Nocella 2004). Much more numerous are studies eliciting information on such closely related issues of professional practice as working conditions, employment and job satisfaction. The term *professional ecology* is used (as in Pöchhacker 2004) to refer to the environmental factors that impact on the interpreter's work: physical working conditions, taskload and stress, personal relations at the workplace, etc. For simultaneous interpreting (SI), in particular, this has been a longstanding concern, culminating in the AIIC (2002) Workload Study but going back to the large-scale study by Cooper et al. (1982) and the more limited effort at the UN in New York reported by Parsons (1978) as well as to the seminal work of Sanz (1930). The studies by Janet Altman (1989, 1990) also queried interpreters about the factors that make their professional life and work more difficult, and this item has also formed part of the AIIC membership surveys since 2004.

*Job satisfaction*, as investigated in the surveys by Cooper et al. (1982), Kurz (1983, 1991) and the AIIC membership surveys (AIIC 2005; Neff 2008), has been studied in connection with the *employment* and market situation as well as working conditions, and the AIIC surveys clearly show that work volume (days worked per year) correlates positively with the degree of job satisfaction (which is generally high among AIIC members to begin with: 75% to 80% of respondents feel "highly satisfied").

At the same time, job satisfaction has to do with interpreters' self-perception of what they do, more specifically their importance for the communication process. Here we know from the surveys by Janet Altman (1989, 1990), among 40 Brussels-based EC interpreters and 54 AIIC members in the British Isles region, that AIIC members in particular believe that the interpreter has a positive (59%) or very positive (42%) effect on the communication process. How the interpreter's *role* is actually construed by the practitioners has been a prime concern in survey research to date, as reflected in the corpus-based ranking shown in Table 2. Selected findings from this line of research will be presented in the remainder of this paper, with an emphasis on contributions that have not yet been widely reported and that are relevant to our survey research project among AIIC members (see Zwischenberger, in this issue).

## Surveys on Role

Studies focusing on the topic of the interpreter's role account for roughly one fifth of the surveys in my corpus. However, the concern with role issues is not spread

evenly over the past three decades since the Venice Symposium. Half of the eight studies were reported between 2004 and 2008, and the remaining ones (Anderson 1978; Altman 1989, 1990; Feldweg 1996) include role as only one of several topics. What is more, the recent set of studies also has larger samples, averaging 127 respondents compared to 36 for the older ones.

Out of the eight studies categorized as surveys on the topic of the conference interpreter's role, five in particular—by Erich Feldweg (1996), Claudia Angelelli (2004), Şeyda Eraslan (2007), Aladdin Al-Zahran (2008) and Judith Gelke (2008)—give special attention to the issue of role. It should be noted, however, that sometimes role issues also crop up in studies on other topics, as in the stress factor analysis by Parsons (1978:317), who cites one respondent as complaining about the stress and tension induced by the sense of being “a conduit rather than an agent.” In a similar vein, the report by Cooper et al. (1982) on their preliminary interview study cites an interpreter feeling “dehumanised,” “like a mere mouthpiece” (1982:99). This item was then taken up in the questionnaire-based quantitative survey, and 61% of respondents indicated that they were occasionally or always “bothered” by the “feeling that I am treated as a piece of technical equipment” (1982:104).

The tension between the interpreter's role as a responsible human agent and as a “communication device” can also be found in the study by Feldweg (1996), which is noteworthy in several respects. To begin with, it is one of the few qualitative conference interpreter surveys in the literature, and with 39 respondents the largest of its kind. Moreover, Feldweg took great care in defining his population—AIIC members in Germany (of whom there were exactly 122 in 1985 when the interviews were conducted). Sampling was more idiosyncratic: Feldweg approached all members of that population with whom he was working in interpreting teams between May and December 1985, and all but one agreed to participate in the interview study. (The interviews, which lasted between 25 minutes and three hours, were conducted in German and recorded by the interviewing author in shorthand.) As this study has not been reported in English, a more detailed look at some of the questions and findings should be of interest.

Aside from the issue of requisite abilities and qualifications, defining the conference interpreter's role and function was one of Feldweg's primary concerns. A key question in his interviews, therefore, was the following: “How do you see your function when you work as an interpreter? How would you explain the interpreter's task to someone who doesn't know anything about interpreting?” (Feldweg 1996:311, my translation). The replies elicited by this question centered on “mediating between (people speaking different) languages” and “enabling communication” but also reflected the notion of offering a “technical service.” In the latter category of responses, one of the most striking metaphors used to describe the



interpreter's role is that of a "transmission belt." The notion of "invisibility," on the other hand, is captured for instance in the demand that the interpreter should enable communication as smoothly and "silently" (*lautlos*) as possible, often with reference to the dictum that interpreting is at its best when it goes unnoticed.

With regard to the tension between the interpreter's socio-cultural mission and the more technical information transfer function, the following statement, by Respondent no. 10, is particularly revealing: "One thing I regret is that the real function of interpreting, that is, building bridges between mentalities, is drowned out by a flood of words and no longer applies. I had assumed, idealistically, that language as a vehicle would lead to better understanding and respect for the mentality of others; but this is possible only in exceptional cases" (Feldweg 1996: 319, my translation). It is remarkable to what extent this comment echoes the view of the conference interpreter's lofty mission as formulated by Herbert (1952) while at the same time lamenting the interpreter's modern-day function as an efficient translation device. The disappointment and dissatisfaction with this state of affairs can easily be linked to the prevalence of simultaneous interpreting from the booth—and traced back several decades. It was none other than Herbert who, speaking at the 1977 Venice Symposium, characterized the conference interpreter as someone who "sits in his glass case, without any contact with the other participants, and translates mechanically what is said on subjects in which he is not interested by people whom he does not know" (Herbert 1978:9).

Herbert's statement clearly suggests that conference interpreting changed for the worse after the heyday of consecutive interpreting. Exiled to the booth, interpreters appear to have a diminished sense of presence and agency, or at least of being perceived as a consequential presence. With consecutive interpreters at the rostrum, or at the table, in contrast, the idea of the interpreter's agency would have seemed quite obvious, and this is indeed reflected in the findings of Sanz (1930: 307), who concluded from his interviews that the interpreter was someone taking the initiative: "l'interprète est obligé à faire un choix des idées exposées par l'orateur, ce qui implique que l'initiative de l'interprète est mise en jeu." He went on to suggest that this initiative might consist in attenuating what a speaker would rather not have said: "Cette initiative se montre, encore, des fois, (...) par l'adoucissement de certaines phrases que l'orateur voudrait n'avoir pas dit, etc., etc." (1930: 307).

In the course of 50 years, with the switch from consecutive to simultaneous as the dominant mode of interpreting, the sense of agency and importance of the conference interpreter can thus be assumed to have declined. This is confirmed indirectly when researchers interested in the conference interpreter's active role in intercultural communication apparently expect to find it more in the consecutive

mode. Aside from the small-scale survey by Eraslan (2007) among 16 conference interpreters in Turkey, the doctoral research by Al-Zahran (2008) is a case in point.

Though focusing his study on consecutive interpreting, Al-Zahran (2008) managed to obtain responses from 295 conference interpreters, including 257 members of AIIC. His data suggest that, in contrast to the AIIC (1984) working definition of the conference interpreter as a “linguistic intermediary,” two thirds of his respondents defined their role as “intercultural mediator” rather than “linguistic mediator,” although there were significant problems with this forced-choice question (either–or, not both).

Difficulties with the questions asked also arose in Angelelli’s (2004) survey, the most complex and sophisticated survey on interpreters’ role perceptions to date. Her instrument, the Interpersonal Role Inventory, was designed to capture respondents’ sense of visibility across national boundaries, interpreting modes and professional domains (conference, court, medical). A number of the 107 North American conference interpreters in her sample felt that some of the question items for such components of “visibility” as “alignment with parties,” “communicating affect,” and “explaining cultural gaps/interpreting culture as well as language” did not apply to their professional realities. Even so, Angelelli’s (2004) findings show that interpreters working in conference settings (as well as court settings) consider themselves significantly less visible than do medical interpreters.

The issue of the interpreter’s visibility, and outright power, was also addressed by Gelke (2008) in her rather ambitious MA thesis in Romance Languages. Though suffering from some weaknesses in questionnaire design, her study is well worth reporting, not least for her non-interpreter’s perspective on the profession and the interpreter’s role. Gelke (2008) distributed an eight-page English questionnaire via email to (unspecified) interpreter associations (secretariats, not members) throughout the world as well as to the European Commission’s Directorate General for Interpretation and staff interpreters in the German Foreign Office. Though this yielded a considerable number of responses from professional conference interpreters (91, including 62 members of AIIC), some of the items in her questionnaire were criticized by respondents (and recipients of the questionnaire such as the EU Commission’s Directorate General for Interpretation) as “irrelevant” or “based on erroneous assumptions” (see sample items in Table 4).

Gelke first had respondents rate a set of ten descriptive phrases defining an “interpreter” (Table 3).

While some of the labels seem less well-chosen than others (e.g., “foreign-tongued,” “speaking tube”), the result is quite clear for the most widely accepted description of the conference interpreter’s role. Not surprisingly, this largely matches the definitional proposal that Feldweg (1996: 476) had his respondents

**Table 3.** “Interpreter” defined (Gelke 2008: 104)

Description/Definition	%
1. Intermediary between people who do not speak the same language	62.7
2. Foreign-tongued voice of the speaker	40.7
3. Intermediary between cultures	33.0
4. Communication medium	30.8
5. <i>Alter ego</i> of the speaker	20.9
6. Language expert	17.6
7. Multilingual expert of a or various discipline(s)	13.2
8. Multilingual actor	9.9
9. Language consultant	8.8
10. Multilingual speaking tube	5.5

ratify in his study. In either case, however, the fact that respondents were asked to rate or comment on the formulation suggested by the author leaves open how interpreters would characterize their role if asked for a spontaneous response (see Zwischenberger, in this issue).

Going beyond the basic question of role to focus on the main concern of her study, that is, the interpreter’s power in political settings, Gelke (2008) posed 19 Yes/No questions relating to politics and power, some of which are listed in Table 4.

Aside from a slight majority (57% Yes each) for the questions about interpreters contributing to democracy and about their neutrality towards the issue

**Table 4.** Politics and power (Gelke 2008: 114–115)

Question	Majority response (Yes/No/ <i>I don’t know</i> )
Do you feel that you play an active role in politics?	77% No
Do you feel your work influences the making of history?	62% No
Do you feel your work is a contribution to democracy?	57% Yes
Have you ever felt proud of the power you hold when interpreting heads of state, deputies, ministers etc.?	55% No
Have you ever felt the temptation of changing the content of the message in a political context?	95% No
Have you ever consciously omitted or added information to your interpretation to enhance an idea or to attenuate it?	88% No
Do you think an interpreter can be completely and fully neutral towards the issue she/he is interpreting?	57% Yes

interpreted (despite the double qualifier “completely and fully”), Gelke’s more delicate questions yield a response pattern that reinforces the image of the non-involved professional. To what extent these findings reflect professional ideology more than the personal feelings an interpreter would disclose to an MA student in an email is a fundamental uncertainty arising from the mail-based survey approach.

At any rate, Gelke does not claim her findings to be representative. While this is an implication of her sampling approach, it is puzzling to read that her study “was not designed to collect quantitative data” but to elicit conference interpreters’ “opinions, experiences and stances” (Gelke 2008: 99). Aside from the substantive issues and findings of her study, Gelke thus supplies an interesting case for methodological debate. As seen in Feldweg’s (1996) study, qualitative interviews are an effective technique for eliciting attitudes, experiences and opinions. The strength of self-administered questionnaires with mainly closed questions, in contrast, lies in numbers, and thus in the power of statistics to test for the impact of demographic and professional background variables and—subject to appropriate sampling—to extrapolate the findings to the population of interest.

## Conclusion

In the relatively young (sub)discipline of interpreting studies, survey research among conference interpreters, essentially since the late 1970s, constitutes a line of investigation that has yet to reach its full potential, in terms of both quantity and quality. With few exceptions, sampling has been a critical issue in research design to date. Though surveys have addressed a range of topics relevant to the profession and the professional reality and identity of its practitioners, most findings are far from solid, for lack of well-defined survey populations and samples; for lack of thoroughly tested instruments; and for lack of replication. And yet, the literature offers a number of inspiring examples, on themes ranging from directionality and quality to workload and, not least, to the conference interpreter’s professional identity and role. The present stock-taking effort, with a focus on methodology as well as selected empirical findings, was designed to set the stage for enhanced survey research efforts on conference interpreting—such as our web-based “Survey on Quality and Role.”

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## Occupation or profession

### A survey of the translators' world\*

David Katan

The main aim of this paper is to report on an online questionnaire which focused on translator and interpreter perception of their working world, their mindset or *Weltanschauung*, and the impact of Translation Studies and university training on that world. Questions, both closed and open-ended, addressed academic/professional training, present role(s) and attitudes and beliefs about 'the profession' itself. Nearly 1000 respondents replied to the questionnaire worldwide. Particular questions focused on how translation should be taught, the role and status of the profession (ideally and in practice), and on personal satisfaction. The results show that university training has had little impact, and that this group of respondents have relatively little interest in the university itself in comparison with lifelong learning, with most emphasis placed on practice and self-development. Members of the group feel themselves to be 'professional' due to their specialized knowledge and abilities. However, their professionalism is mainly limited to their responsibilities to the text itself, and there is relatively little interest in the wider context. They are acutely aware of the lack of public recognition, and both the interpreters and the translators agree that translators in particular suffer from a markedly lower social status. However, only a minority of the respondents feel the need to change the status quo and satisfy trait theory criteria regarding professional recognition, possibly because the vast majority of respondents are more than satisfied with their job. In conclusion, it appears that translation can still only be categorized as an occupation rather than as a profession, and it is suggested that a new role be created with its own university course to cater to the professional language provider.

**Keywords:** translator training, university, profession, trait theory, status, satisfaction, survey



## Introduction

The main aim of this paper is to report on an online questionnaire which focused on translator and interpreter<sup>1</sup> perception of their working world, their mindset or *Weltanschauung*, and the impact of Translation Studies<sup>2</sup> and university training on that world. Although translation has been practiced for millennia (Chesterman and Wagner 2002, Palumbo 2009: 1), and is possibly the “second oldest profession” (Baer and Koby 2003: viii), “the academicization” (Baker 2008: xiv) of the practice only began within living memory. And with academicization has come the (academic) view that the practitioners no longer ply a trade as “secondary, mechanical scribe[s]”, but that they are “crosscultural professional[s]” thanks to the revolution of the functionalist theory (Gentzler 2001: 71). They are now “highly professional translators who belong to the same ‘world’ as their clients, who are focused on professionalism and making a good living, and who are highly trained...” (Baker and Chesterman (2008: 22). Mona Baker’s comment is actually part of a narrative which exhorts translators to go beyond mere professionalism and to take responsibility for the fact that “Intervention is inherent in the act of translation and interpreting” (ibid: 16).

There are also a number of dissenting voices, which point out the academics’ distance from reality (e.g., Milton 2001), a trend towards deprofessionalization (e.g., Pym 2005), the translator’s ‘voluntary servitude’ (Simeone 1998: 23), and the quality downturn due to lowest-bid market economics (e.g., Muzii 2006) or to the competition from IT (e.g., Biau Gil and Pym 2006). Also, while Sela-Sheffey (2008: 2) laments the lack of research or findings regarding translator status, she does suggest that “all evidence shows that they are usually regarded as minor, auxiliary manpower.”

## The Survey Methodology

An on-line questionnaire was produced in the hope of contacting as many working translators globally as possible in order to investigate which set of assertions most closely reflects reality, and to what extent we can identify a supranational practitioner identity. A total of twenty three questions were compiled using a default online template,<sup>3</sup> which allowed for a number of permutations. Apart from the classic multiple choice, there was the possibility of using a matrix, allowing for more than one choice per row. Most questions also included text boxes for respondents to justify their response or to add their own comments. The first questions requested practical information, such as previous academic/professional training and present role(s), and languages used. However, the most important part of the

survey was dedicated to attitudes and beliefs about 'the profession' itself. Particular questions, discussed below, focused on how translation should be taught, the role and status of the profession (ideally and in practice), and on personal satisfaction.

The survey was made available online from February to June 2008. The link to the questionnaire was distributed in two principal ways (neither of which can claim scientific validity), both capitalizing on the "small world phenomenon" of connectedness and collaborative spaces (Herrero 2006: 111). The first mode of distribution was through personal contacts, from individual to individual, from an initial mailing list of academic colleagues, past students and professional translators. The second mode was through a small number of national translation associations (Australia, Spain, Italy). Therefore, although this was a global survey, the connecting nodes favored some countries more than others (see Figure 1 below).

A total of 1213 began the questionnaire and 890 (73.6%) completed the survey, which indicates the success of using the 'email invite' system. In addition, the open-ended questions attracted between 100 and 400 individual comments. However, one clear drawback is the total lack of control over *which* individuals or communities of interest would respond, once the first set of invitations was sent. There was also a small number of erroneous replies, with, for example, respondents ticking too many answers, or seeming to respond illogically.<sup>4</sup> Also, respondents were able to skip individual questions either partially or entirely. Hence, the figures should be viewed as giving a general indication of the translators' world rather than being numerically comparable. For many questions a 5-point Likert rating scale was used, which, as Oppenheim (2000: 200) points out, can be criticized with regard to absolute numbers but "tends to perform very well when it comes to a reliable, rough ordering of people with regard to a particular attitude".

Naturally, the findings also carry with them all the problems associated with this type of survey, beginning not only with the methodology and procedure but through to loaded questions and researcher instrumentalization. All these affect validity and reliability. So what do the skewed and then manipulated results actually tell us, and to what extent can we generalize from the sample? To help in assessing validity, the questions as originally put are included below and the reader is recommended to visit the *SurveyMonkey* site to assess and fill in the revised questionnaire.<sup>5</sup> However, as Oppenheim (2000: 149) points out, "the problem of attitudinal validity remains one of the most difficult in social research and one to which an adequate solution is not in sight." With regard to reliability, for most questions a chi-squared test showed that country of origin was a significant factor, though country generalizations will not be made, due to the specific-node nature of the sample gathering. Importantly, individual country significance did not affect the overall Likert patterns. So, the survey gives us a selected snapshot of what nearly 1000 individual respondents wished others to know about their perception

of their world. Although the survey is heavily Eurocentric, patterns of responses and comments are clearly discernable that suggest that there is 'a translator world' and that it is not the same as that of their clients.

## Results

### *Role and Specialization*

Andrew Chesterman (2001: 146) points out that defining the role of the 'translator' is no easy task, and he is reduced to suggesting the following distinction: "a translator" and someone "who does translations (sometimes)." Similarly, in this survey sample, respondents were asked to differentiate between "full-time or 1st role," "also or 2nd role," and "at times or 3rd role." They could choose from as many of the following as they wished:

- freelance/agency/permanent translators and/or interpreters
- lecturers/researchers (grouped here as 'teachers')
- undergraduate/MA/PhD students

There was also an open ended response for "other role/s." The grouped figures are shown below.

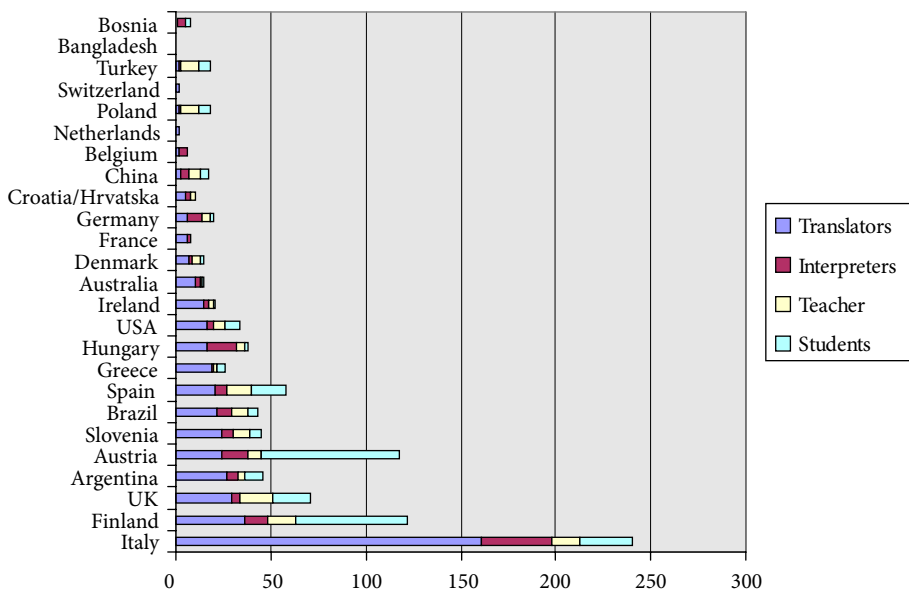


Figure 1. Country of work

As is evident, the declared main role of respondents from most countries was “working translator.” Finland and Austria represent the two exceptions. Yet, over half of the 50 Finnish students *also* translate (22 freelance and 1 agency). The Austrians, on the other hand, appear to be *bona fide* full-time students. The figures for the translators break down as follows: ‘freelance’ (427), ‘agency’ (53) and ‘permanent’ translator (93). The number of ‘full-time/1st role’ interpreters was 173. The two groups together comprise the working ‘T/I’ group.<sup>6</sup>

Unexpectedly, a number of the working T/I’s said they had two full-time/1st roles. 16 respondents, for example, ticked both ‘agency’ and ‘freelance’ translator as full time. Also, and more importantly, even though translating and interpreting are generally accepted as very separate roles, each requiring specialized competencies (see, for example, Gile 1995; De Groot 2000),<sup>7</sup> one in five of the translators (97) divided their time equally as interpreters. What, is even more significant though is that proportionately more of the full-time interpreters (one in three) also translate full-time. So, although neither role is pursued exclusively as a career, the different proportions suggest that (1) interpreting is less accessible as a full-time job to the non-specialist than is translation; and, (2) for some at least, interpreting falls into Bourdieu’s (1993:43) description of the writer or artist’s lot: “an occupation which is not a ‘job’... they have a secondary occupation which provides their main income.”

Of particular interest, considering the above, is the fact that not only are there a number of respondents worldwide declaring a clear 50/50 T/I role split, but also there are very few who have *only* one role. Over two-thirds (69%) of respondents ‘also’ had a second role, while over half (54%) had a third role ‘at times.’ This is apart from the 75 (8%) who vaunted a fourth role, which mainly centered around teaching, although responses also included “painter,” “journalist,” and “mother.”

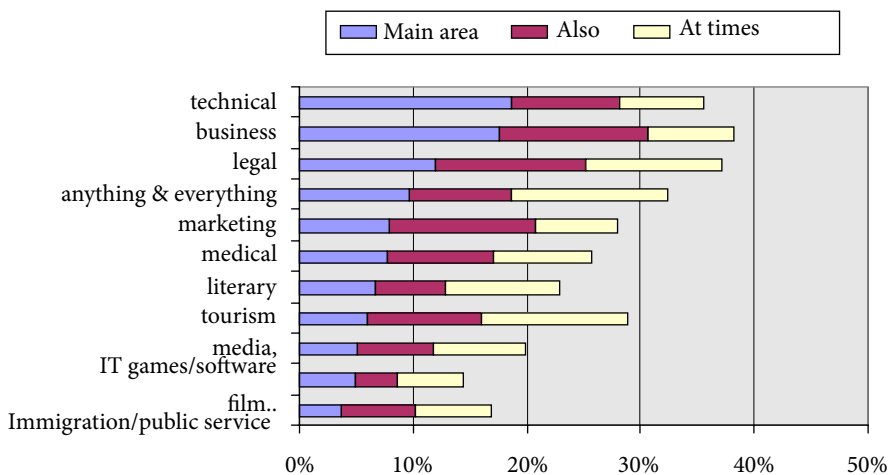


Figure 2. Areas of work (translators and interpreters)

The main areas of activity between translators and interpreters differ, as would be expected (e.g., literary work for translating, and public services work for interpreters). What is noteworthy is the fact that the translators worldwide are involved in a broader number of fields. In all cases, the figure for ‘involved in’ is higher if not double that of the interpreter — a further indication that as a profession translators are less specialized than their interpreting colleagues. However, there were few (8%) full-time T/Is who relied on ‘anything and everything’ that came their way.

### *T/I Perception of their Role*

Those who study the sociology of professions appear to agree on one point only, that “There is no precise and unique definition of ‘professions’” (Dietrich and Roberts 1999:807; see also Macdonald 1999:1, Lester 2009:1, Locke 2001). We will focus on two main approaches: perception and traits. With regard to perception, Michael Dietrich and Jennifer Roberts’s review of the literature concludes that the distinguishing feature of a profession is purely the ability to gain societal recognition as such; that “it is merely a title claimed by certain occupations at certain points in time.” Therefore, respondents were asked — the seemingly obvious question — whether translating was, in fact, “a profession.” 955 agreed that it was, indeed, a profession, while only 41 disagreed. The 401 comments which the respondents left give us an insight into the T/I perception, and into what the group believes distinguishes (or does not distinguish) their profession from a trade or occupation.

The 386 positive responses were ordered into approximate semantic fields as follows:

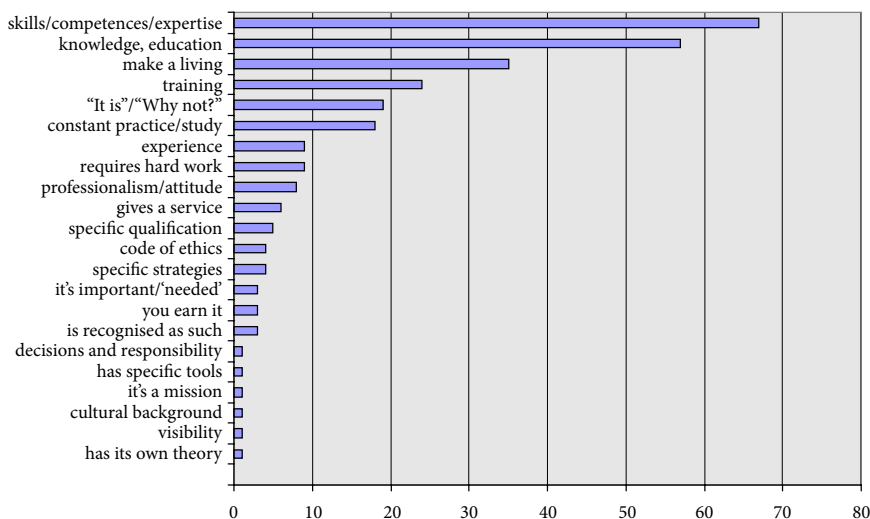


Figure 3. What makes “T/I” a profession?: percentage replies

First and foremost, only an extremely small proportion (5%) actually mentioned “is recognized as such,” i.e., societal recognition. A sizeable minority 7% found the question rhetorical, commenting “Because it is” and “Why not.” Even more, 13% (35 respondents) replied that: “It’s a profession if it can be described as how you make a living, how you spend most of your time, how you answer the question ‘What do you do?’” (Business/technical freelance/I, Degree in I, MA in Linguistics, Brazil; 16 years); “a job like any other: you pay taxes, you earn a living” (Media freelance/T, Degree in Languages, Slovenia; 5 years); and “What else would it be, if it is a job you are doing for living?” (Full time T/Agency, MA in T, Finland; 3 years). However, most respondents replied with a list of traits. The most important pattern to emerge was the focus on the particular, the specialized/special or specific skills and competences that make a translator or interpreter a professional: “T/I needs special series of knowledge ... that other occupations hardly need.” (Literary permanent T and researcher, MA in T, China; 15 years); “Because it requires expert knowledge, specialized training and special abilities” (Legal, marketing and business/permanent T, MA in T, Austria; 12 years); “people also underestimate and believe that is very easy to be done without training. People believe that if you speak a foreign language you can work as a translator and an interpreter, they do not realize that a translator and an interpreter have to work very hard, they need to read a lot, do a lot of research, consult grammars and dictionaries and sometimes even be an expert in the specific field that you work in as I do” (International relations, freelance T, Courses in Interpreting and Translating, Brazil; 4 years).

A second pattern that runs through these comments can be summed up by the idea of “life-long learning” and practical experience to complement (or substitute for) university training: “Ideally both [translators and interpreters] require university level training and a great deal of on-the-job training and dedication” (Anything and everything T/freelance, I/Lecturer, MA Languages, Hungary; 21+ years); “Good T/Is are well-trained, adhere to a code of ethics, engage in continuing education / professional development.” (Medical T/I freelance, Degree in T, Australia; 18 years); “Needs permanent study and vivid interest in all things going on the planet” (Medical/freelance T/T, Degree/MA in T/I, Austria; 21+ years); “...it can be learned as a trade and work is found on the basis of experience rather than qualifications” (Freelance T/I, Degree/MA in T/I, Italy; 5 years); and “...[it] takes a lot of hard work, study, linguistic competence and experience to work as a translator” (Technical/freelance T, MA in T/I, Ireland; 5 years).

Those (23) who explicitly stated why T/I is not a profession mentioned mainly the lack of certification, “anyone can do it” (8); the lack of public recognition (4); and interestingly, the idea that T/I was either “an adjunct” or “additional” add-on to other roles (3); and that it was in itself either too fragmented, too part-time or

too limited to be called a profession (6). Also, surprisingly perhaps, only two specifically mentioned the poor pay conditions.

Just over 80% of both interpreters and translators also agreed (in response to another question) that there was, unlike in most professions, “no career structure”. The implication is that a T/I can be termed a professional, not because she works exclusively in T or I or within a structured institution, but because she has earned the title, having specialized over time and having made a name for herself individually: “... able to provide translation services to an increasing number of customers over the years and trust your own competence more and more. Well, perhaps this could be called “personal development” rather than “career structure” (Literary freelance T, MA in T, Finland, 12 years). Hence, it is the “professionalism” of the individual practitioners which, according to the respondents, renders the activity a profession. This can be associated with what has been called the “classical democratic professionalism” trait approach, which focuses primarily on “the possession by an occupational group of exclusive knowledge and practice” (Locke 2001: 31, quoting Sachs 1998). This definition of professionalism also includes “altruism (an ethical concern by the group for its clients) and autonomy (the professional’s need and right to exercise control over entry into, and subsequent practice within, that particular occupation).”

Ethical concern is certainly included in the respondents’ replies with comments such as: ‘professionalism/attitude,’ ‘gives a service,’ ‘code of ethics,’ ‘responsibility’ and ‘mission,’ as can be seen from Figure 3. Clearly, however, the second part concerning “control over entry” is problematic. One respondent (an interpreter) explained that even in Denmark, where “We have a title (State-authorized translator and interpreter) which is protected and no-one else is allowed to certify

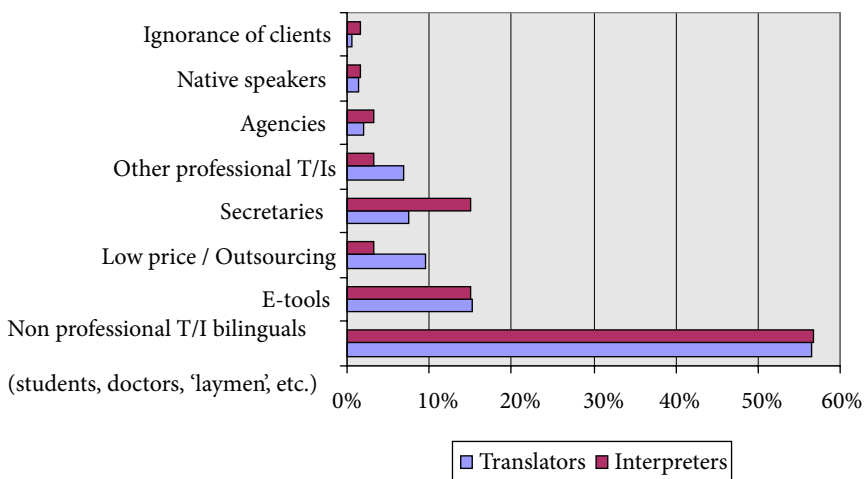


Figure 4. Where is the competition coming from?

translations ... Anyone can set up shop as a translator (and a lot of people do after shorter university studies)."

To gauge just how problematic this lack of control is, respondents were asked to comment on the issue of competition. They were asked: "Where do you see competition coming from?" (388 responses).

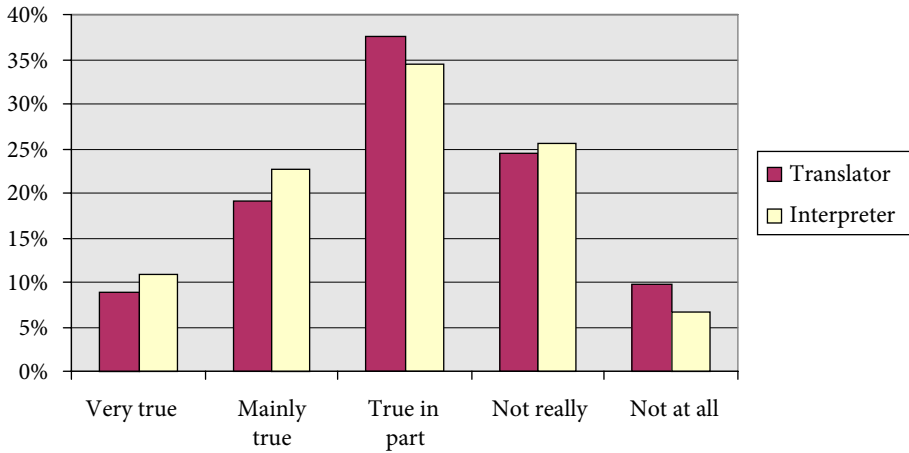
There appear to be two distinct macro groups:

1. Non-specialist translation amateurs: "Secondary school students, uni students of all proveniences, taxi drivers, secretaries, civil servants with government jobs, school teachers, practically anyone with a uni degree and a smattering of a foreign language or without a degree" (T/freelancer, degree in Specialized languages and on-the-job training in a variety of specialized fields, Slovenia, 19 years); "Cowboys" (Business T/Freelance, UK, MA in T; 18 years).
2. Subject specialist translation amateurs: "The bigger "threat" I believe comes from professionals from other fields (i.e., those with subject specific knowledge) who also happen to be bilingual/multilingual and translate within their own fields of expertise" (Medical T/freelance, Australia, Degree in T; 18 years); "lawyers who take '3 month course in UK' following graduation, doctors the same" (Legal interpreter, Turkey, Degree in T/I; 21+ years).

These 'amateurs' together account for two-thirds (65%) of the translator competition and nearly three-quarters of the interpreter competition (72%). Interestingly, technology is only seen as a mild threat in the "middle to long term," as one respondent said. Respondents were also asked to gauge the degree of the threat, and to reply to the following summary of Terence Johnson's (1972) still influential *Professions and Power*: 'A profession tends to dominate and rebuff competition from ancillary trades and occupations, as well as subordinating and controlling lesser but related trades.' How true is this in your experience/opinion in T/I?" Their replies indicate that both translators and interpreters are able to withstand the competition 'in part,' which adds to the view of survival of professional individuals rather than of the profession itself. Returning to the issue of autonomy, the concept not only involves control over who enters the field but also "the exercise of autonomous thought and judgement, and responsibility to clients and wider society" (Lester 2009:2), or being a "Higher" rather than a "Lower" "Autonomy Professional" (HAP v LAP) (Hasan 2002: 540, Williams 2002: 92; see also Derber's 1983: 169 'ideological' autonomy). This aspect of autonomy (according to Lester) is one of the few measures of the trait theory regarding professions that has stood the test of time.

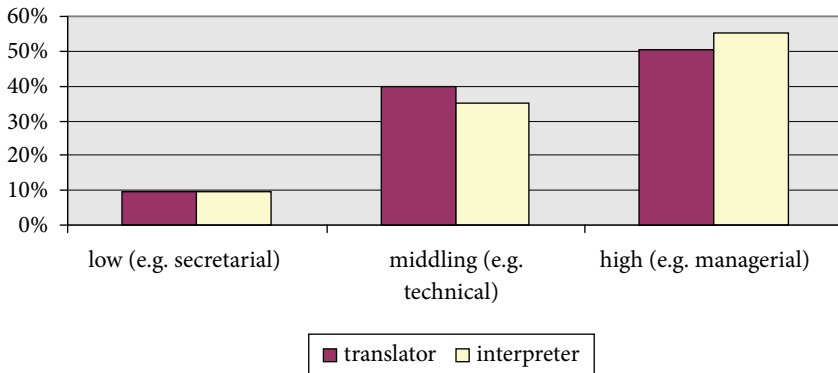
The working T/Is were asked to comment on this aspect specifically, through the following question: "Professional autonomy is the degree of control of your own work, and also the degree of control over the work of others. How high do you





**Figure 5.** Can T/I withstand the competition?

rate the degree of control a T/I has over their own output?': 'low (e.g., secretarial)', 'middling (e.g., technical)' or 'high (e.g., managerial)'. Here, it does seem that the academics and the professionals are in agreement. In terms of percentages we have the following:



**Figure 6.** T/I degree of autonomy/control

Clearly both translators and interpreters see themselves as having high, managerial, control over their output, and do not perceive any difference between translating and interpreting. Over 50% of the T/Is believe that they are the specialists who alone can decide and realize the final product, while up to 90% believe that they effectively have technical control over the task to be done. Yet, strangely perhaps, this aspect of autonomy/control did not really figure in the respondents' freely given comments regarding the profession, except for the 3% who mentioned "decisions and responsibilities."

Of the few who felt that the autonomy was low, 41 left comments regarding who they thought was the HAP. All but one stated that the HAP in the T/I process was whoever pays (the agency, commissioner, client, editor, etc.). The one exceptional comment relates to the T/I's traditional subservience to the text: "fidelity constraints do not leave space for professional autonomy [unlike] the one managers might have"(Freelance T/I, Degree in I, Finland; 2 years). Interestingly, only two respondents specifically mentioned the implications for their profession: "The interpreter has complete control of his or her output, I would say, because their output is instantaneous, nothing to tamper with there [but as a translator] the client [can] make mincemeat out of my work" (Interpreter, Degree in Languages, Course in T, Slovenia, 19 years); "the final client, sometimes mak[es] the translation better and sometimes mak[es] it far worse" (T/Agency, Master in T, Belgium, 15 years).

The ability of others to change the translator's work is a fact for most if not all translators, and is a clear sign of the client as the HAP requesting the technical services of a LAP. Yet, this undisputable fact does not appear to be the focus of the T/I group, who perceive translators as having 'middling' to 'high' control. What is noteworthy, then, is the extent to which the T/Is focus on the professionalism *before* a work is submitted to a client (see also Chesterman 2000: 26). And, true to professional form, T/Is are not influenced by the commissioner while they work, as the responses to the following question reveal: "In your experience where is the main focus/loyalty when you interpret/translate?": 'the original text/speech'; 'the reader/listener'; 'the commissioner (specifications etc.)'; 'it depends, meaning yourself, i.e. your own T/I choices, which may oscillate between all the above at any given moment'".

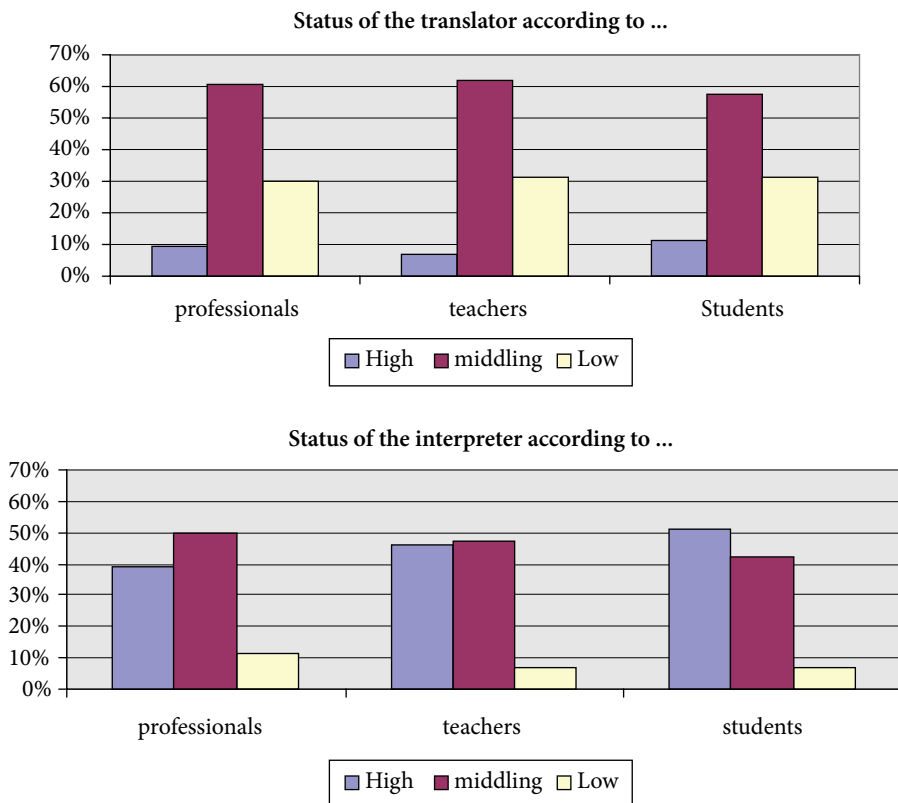
T/I group	1st (Most)	2nd	3rd	4th	total
text/speech	156 52%	96 32%	33 11%	15 5%	300
reader/listener	86 29%	127 43%	66 22%	15 5%	294
commissioner	36 13%	59 22%	122 46%	50 19%	267
"It depends"/own decision	73 33%	19 9%	36 16%	92 42%	220

**Figure 7.** T/I main focus or loyalty

There was strong agreement that the T/Is should not be unduly influenced by the commissioner's requirements. Indeed, looking vertically at the list of '1st/most important' loyalty, the commissioner comes last. It is the traditional tie to the source text which really prevails, hardly representing a Functionalist revolution. The T/I group were also certainly LAP (and hardly activist) oriented in that most agreement was that 'own decision' should be the least important area of focus.

The respondents were then asked: “If the job is considered to be a ‘good linguistic transfer of the original,’ to what extent is the translator or interpreter concerned with reader or listener reaction?”: ‘always,’ ‘very much,’ ‘it depends,’ ‘not usually,’ or ‘never.’” They were also asked to decide to what extent ‘ideally’ was different from ‘in practice.’ A relatively low figure of 56% of the T/I group believe that reader reaction is ideally always their concern, although if we add the ‘very much’ responses, we cover 86% of the T/I replies, which might be taken as a sign that the Functionalist approach is taking root. However, the most significant result is the gap between the T/I ideal and their autonomy in practice. Out of the 56% of T/Is who believed that they should be concerned with or responsible for their end-user’s reaction, only 20% said that this happened in practice — a clear sign of further LAP autonomy.

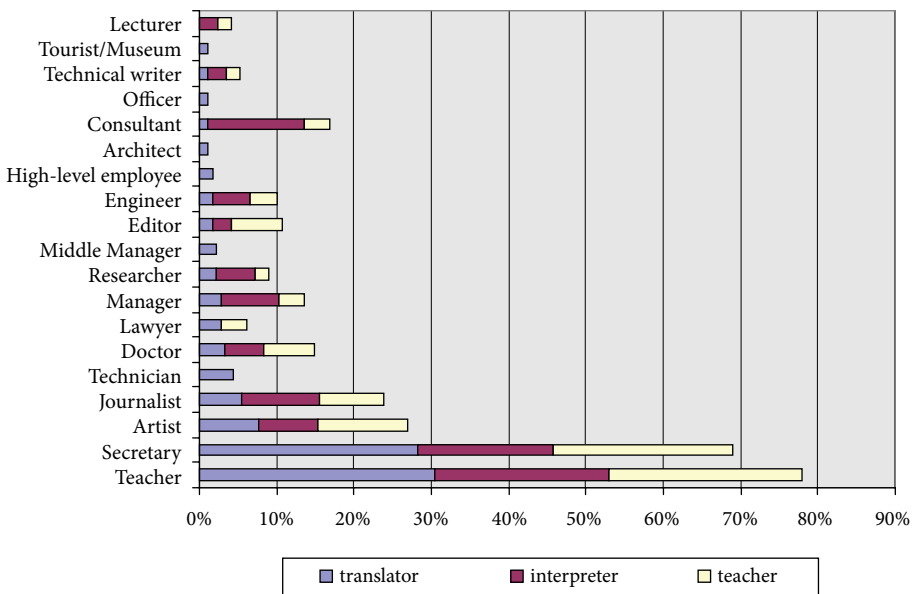
This leads us to the issue of status, and back to perception and societal recognition. The specific question was: “What level of social status, regard and esteem does the job have?: ‘high,’ ‘middling’ or ‘low.’” The first graph (Figure 8) shows how



**Figure 8.** T/I status

translators are perceived by the working T/Is, teachers and students, while the second graph shows how interpreters are perceived.

There is general agreement among all respondents that interpreters are regarded with relatively high esteem and are perceived to enjoy relatively high status with an average of 43% 'high.' Only an average of 9% of the respondents classified interpreter status as 'low.' Translators, on the other hand, are clearly perceived by all as having at best a middling status (59%). More importantly, it should be noted that almost a third (31%) of the respondents classified the translator as having "low" status. To further understand what 'low' status actually means, the respondents were then asked to "give an example of (an)other job(s) with the same status." Here, there were a number of clear similarities and difference between translator and interpreter replies:



**Figure 9.** Similar-status jobs according to translators, interpreters and teachers

To begin with, teachers and secretaries were by far the most popular choices, accounting for 50% of the total responses, and almost exactly in equal proportions. The translators themselves gave proportionally more weight to the 'teacher/secretary' ticket than did the interpreters or the teachers. Interestingly, the 21 literary translators who left comments also followed the secretarial/teacher ticket, and mentioned 'editor' but not 'artist' or 'journalist.' Interpreters follow a similar path, apart from an individual high peak of creative "consultants" (8%). It is notable that virtually no translator suggested this.

Indeed, the comments attached to the high ‘secretarial’ response underlines the awareness the professionals have of the yawning gap between the (academic) ideal, the professionalism of the job and the perception from outside: “Ideally a translator is highly regarded, but actually the working conditions are less respected than those of any secretary, and bargaining conditions are zero” (Freelance T, Italy, Degree in Languages; 12 years); “I must admit, though, from some clients’ perspective the job of a translator is of the same level as a secretary” (Freelance T, USA, Arts Degree and MA in T; 15 years); “Most of the time, translators are socially regarded as mere secretaries of texts producers, however, I think that interpreters are better considered” (Legal I/T, Spain, Degree in T/I; 6 years); “At the moment a secretary although I hope that this will change soon” (Medical freelance T, France, Degree in T/I, MA in Arts and Certification in “Medical Editing”, 17 years); “Secretary!” (Permanent T, Switzerland, Degree in T; 20 years); “Typist” (Permanent legal T, Finland, MA in T/I; 3 A languages and 6 B languages; 21+ years).

What is striking in terms of the academic/professional divide is that the translator/secretary equivalence is actually enshrined in the EU official classification of the profession in “Nace Rev 2.”<sup>8</sup> As the preface states, “this legislation imposes the use of the new classification uniformly within all the Member States”; and indeed “translation and secretarial work” can be clearly read next to VAT details on a number of translator websites.<sup>9</sup> It is the translator, though, rather than the interpreter who is explicitly, in the public eye, collocated with ‘secretary.’ The interpreter clearly occupies another world. In fact, a *Google* search for ‘interpreter’ results in a list that highlights Nicole Kidman, who gives the role high visibility and status, and Catherine Tate, who comically shows that an amateur cannot do the job. Actual interpreting services sites also clearly involve highly experienced people. The same search for ‘translator,’ on the other hand, collocates with ‘automatic,’ ‘computer assisted,’ ‘machine,’ ‘technical’ or ‘free on-line’ options. In short, translation occupies a non-human, technical LAP habitus.

## University theory and training

A frequently quoted trait theory prerequisite to a profession is the following: “A profession arises when any trade or occupation transforms itself through the development of formal qualifications based upon education and examinations.” The 19,700 *Google* hits give this particular traits theory statement an air of authority. The quote originally comes from *New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought* (Bullock and Trombley 2000: 689), which also gives the statement an added sense of authority although only nine of the hits actually cite the dictionary itself.

With regard to training, the respondents grouped as follows:<sup>10</sup>

1. those with some form of university translation or interpreting qualification (degree, MA or PhD): 629 (55%):
  - Pure T/I university training only (e.g., no language degree): 349 (30%)
  - T/I and “Language” or “Specialized Language” qualification: 280 (24%)
2. those with a language/linguistics qualification only: 273 (24%)
3. and those who had no university training in either T/I or languages 251 (22%)

The email invite system clearly favored the academically trained translators (due to personal contacts and same-interest communities). Also, Italian graduates provide an extremely high artificial share of the T/I trained T/Is. Yet, even with this small-world artifice, the number of T/I trained respondents still makes only just over half (55%) of the total working T/I respondents.

Of the 629 T/I graduates, over half (350, 56%) are now working as full-time T/Is while the rest are full-time academics or are still students studying for their second or third qualification (MA or Ph.D.) and who ‘also’ translate or interpret. Very few (fifteen altogether) of these T/I university qualified respondents, however, actually mentioned ‘qualification’ as a feature of being a professional, and two actually mentioned qualifications in terms of some future ideal: “high-level qualifications should be a pre-requisite”; “it (should) require a formal qualification.” Three others mentioned the need for a professional rather than an academic qualification, for example: “High level of qualification (even if not academic) to do the job properly” (Technical/Legal permanent T, MA in T/I., Belgium; 21+ years); “There needs to be some kind of Rating System that everyone agrees on. Peer review etc. Not just educational institutions providing exams. Peer organizations should be able to qualify other members. Not as a must have. But as a good-idea-to-have qualification” (Legal/Literary/Technical, etc., freelance T/I, Degree/MA in T, USA; 21 years).

A quarter of the responses (see Figure 3) mentioned the importance of training although it was difficult to decide to what extent this was academic or professional. So, although ‘qualification’ was hardly mentioned, ‘education’ and (lifelong) ‘training’ was. What, then, should the training consist of? According to Eric Hoyle and Peter John’s (1995) popularly quoted definition, for an occupation to become a profession it must be grounded in a recognized unique body of professional knowledge.<sup>11</sup> Given that university is traditionally the institution responsible for training ‘the professions,’ respondents were asked to decide on the order of importance of a variety of subjects for an imaginary course in Translation and/or Interpreting. Below are the responses for the T/I group.


9. A specialist course in T/I will include the following areas of study. Rate each area in terms of importance. PLEASE distribute the courses over ALL columns.						
	Essential: 10 credits	Important: 8 credits	Useful: 6 credits	Not essential: 4 credits	Optional: 2 credits	Response Count
Contrastive grammar/linguistics	<b>29.6% (130)</b>	29.2% (128)	27.3% (120)	8.7% (38)	5.2% (23)	439
Corpus linguistics	11.4% (49)	31.0% (133)	<b>33.6% (144)</b>	13.1% (56)	11.0% (47)	429
T/I ethics	16.7% (72)	29.1% (125)	<b>35.3% (152)</b>	12.6% (54)	6.3% (27)	430
T/I practice	<b>81.3% (369)</b>	11.2% (51)	6.2% (28)	0.7% (3)	0.7% (3)	454
T/I strategies	<b>50.5% (221)</b>	26.9% (118)	16.7% (73)	4.6% (20)	1.4% (6)	438
T/I theory	16.7% (74)	29.4% (130)	<b>33.3% (147)</b>	14.3% (63)	6.3% (28)	442
T/I electronic tools	<b>37.8% (168)</b>	32.7% (145)	20.3% (90)	6.3% (28)	2.9% (13)	444
Intercultural theory/practices	23.0% (99)	<b>31.9% (137)</b>	30.7% (132)	10.2% (44)	4.2% (18)	430
Political/Public Institutions/Civilization	14.7% (65)	27.0% (119)	<b>31.7% (140)</b>	16.8% (74)	9.8% (43)	441
The T/I profession	<b>28.1% (123)</b>	27.7% (121)	25.6% (112)	11.0% (48)	7.6% (33)	437
Subject specific knowledge	<b>33.6% (147)</b>	29.7% (130)	25.2% (110)	6.2% (27)	5.3% (23)	437
Contemporary affairs	16.4% (67)	24.0% (98)	<b>29.3% (120)</b>	14.2% (58)	16.1% (66)	409
Other (please specify) 						50
<b>answered question</b>						<b>459</b>

Figure 10. University module importance according to the T/I group

What clearly emerges here is a strong preference for ‘practice.’ ‘T/I strategies’ is next. This term is potentially ambiguous, but from the comments it has been understood to refer mainly to rules regarding language or discourse and translation procedures within particular language pairs, and not to more general translation procedures. ‘T/I theory’ is seen as essential by a mere 74 out of the 459 T/Is who replied. If we separate out the three primary groups — working T/I, teacher and student — we have the following results as presented in Figure 11.

The first point to note is that there is broad agreement among all groups regarding the essential and non-essential courses. There is also total agreement that the most important aspect of the “academicization of translator and interpreter training” (Baker and Saldahna, 2008: xiv) is that which is least academic: practice. If we concentrate on the top five ‘most important’ translator interests, they are all practical, technically based skills, all focussing on finding the right word in the other language: practice, strategies, e-tools, subject knowledge and contrastive grammar. The T/I qualified subgroup maintains the same distance between the top three, and only narrowly invert the grammar with subject specific knowledge.

Further down the list, i.e., judged less important, we find the T/I scholarly interests, such as the profession itself, theory and ethics. It is these subjects that

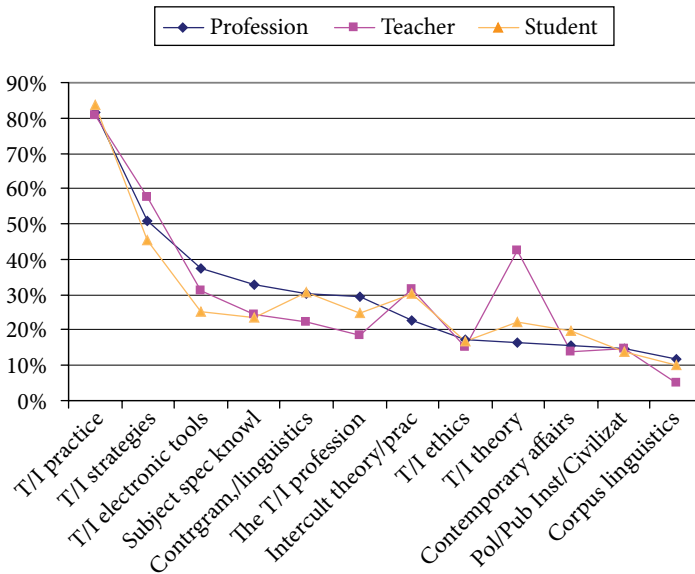


Figure 11. Essential university modules according to T/Is, teachers and students

would actually help T/Is (re)consider their level of autonomy, become ‘self reflexive’ (Tymoczko, 2007: 19), and hence improve their ability to emerge as a profession, as ‘cultural mediators’ or ‘activists.’ According to this survey, though, this type of university course is of secondary importance, except of course for the academics themselves. They have, as can be seen from their isolated peak above, placed theory as third, followed by intercultural theory. Students also show slightly more interest in linguistics and in theory than the practicing translators.

With regard to the least popular ‘essential modules,’ the respondents as a whole agreed on both the more traditional courses delivering background knowledge (institutions) and the more recent introduction of courses on corpus linguistics. The translators with a university T/I qualification think no differently. Translation theory is actually the ninth ‘most important’ module out of a total of 12. Study of the profession itself loses out to intercultural theory-practice, which is heartening for this particular author, but still leaves the subject half-way down the list of ‘most important’ modules. It should also be borne in mind that due to the very nature of the sampling, there will have been an initial skew toward things intercultural.

What seems to be the guiding choice is the utility or ‘spendability’ in terms of a translator’s ability to use the training to learn more (specialized) lexis and text grammar. ‘Strategies’ are certainly part of ‘immediate spendability’ in that they provide a ready-made *modus operandi*. Corpus linguistics, although text-oriented, is ruled out quite simply because it is too time-consuming and has a low pay-off per text. It is also a much more recent tool.



The discrepancy between the academics' optimism regarding the relevance of translation studies and its impact on the workplace, and the reality could be simply due to time. It would be logical then that if the "academicization of translator and interpreter training" were going to have an impact, it would be most evident among the younger university-trained translators who will have benefited from wider exposure to this relatively new phenomenon. To test this hypothesis, the responses were filtered according to the length of work experience (divided into five-year cohorts), on the idealized assumption that the translators/interpreters begin their work experience more or less at the same time after graduation.

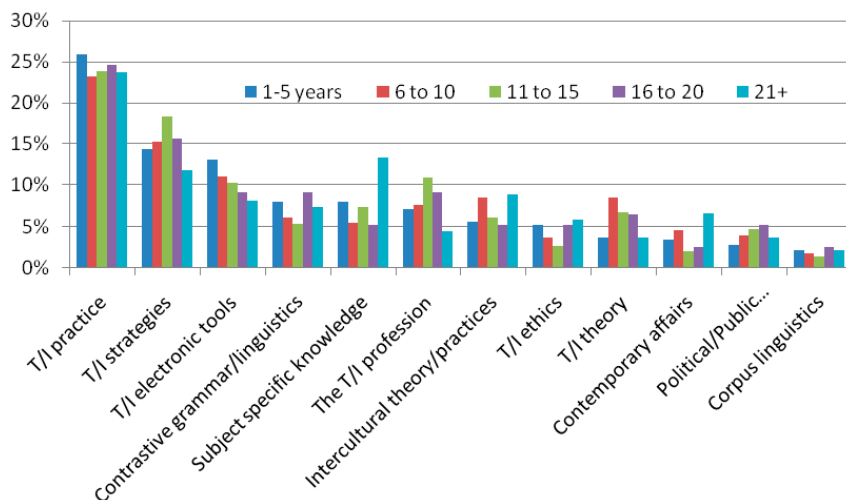
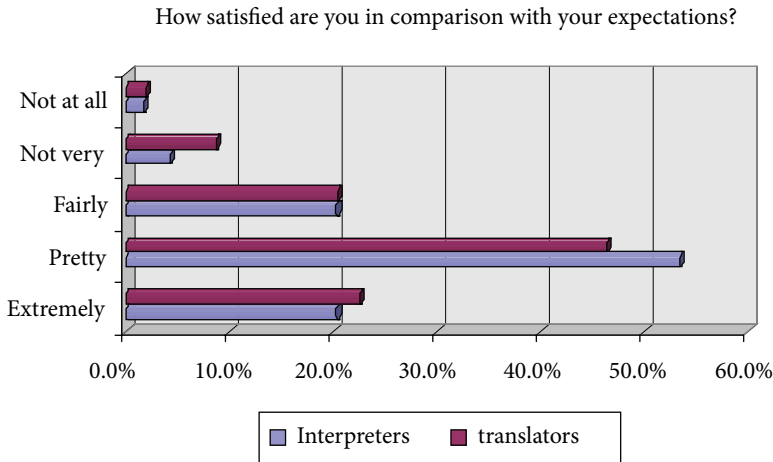


Figure 12. Essential university modules according to years of experience

It is clear that the pattern remains broadly the same. The 21+ group puts much more emphasis on subject-specific knowledge compared to any other group, but otherwise all the results are broadly comparable — including perception of the importance of 'T/I theory' and corpus linguistics, where both the youngest and the oldest translators are in total agreement. From this survey, then, we can see no perceivable increase in the appreciation of the fruits of academia over time.

And yet, this gap between university training and the real world was rarely mentioned as constituting a real problem — as the replies to the following question revealed: "How satisfied are you with your present job in comparison with your initial expectations regarding the field of translating/interpreting?"

Even though translators, in particular, are acutely aware of unfair treatment in the workplace, of their lack of visibility and status, they not only perceive themselves internally as professionals but also are as 'pretty' to 'extremely' satisfied as their more illustrious interpreting colleagues. A number of key values



**Figure 13.** Satisfaction with work compared to expectations according to T/Is

related to satisfaction are apparent from the 198 final general comments regarding “experience, the profession...” left by the respondents. These include ‘job flexibility,’ ‘continuous learning,’ and ‘finding *le mot juste*’: “Some professions are not very family-friendly, and interpreting is one of them, unfortunately. Translation allows greater independence in time management.” (Tourism/Immigration freelance T/I, Degree in T/I, MA in languages, PhD in Arts, Hungary; 7 years); “It was the best job in the world, it was the worst job in the world, ... and you never get to a point where you can say This is it, or I’m it. You’re learning something new every day, and contributing to nothing else than the history of world literature, which is a history of translations... In return of all this, you get little money, little respect, many humiliations, and the occasional Thank you. Which makes it all worth the effort” (T/freelancer, Degree in Public Relations and Corporate Communication, course in T, Italy; 6 years); “As translator you have with each translation the opportunity to learn something new, for me a really important and great thing!” (Anything and everything freelance T, Degree in T, PhD in Science, Finland; 10 years); “I have done this job for about 40 years and I still like translating and I still like spending sometimes a whole day or more looking for the ‘right’ word...” (Freelance T, Degree in T, PhD in Arts, Italy; 21+ years); “It is often a very low-paid, lonely, unappreciated job, but what joy when the translation comes out right!” (Literary/business freelance T, Degree in Science, Greece; 21+ years); “Translation and interpreting happen to be my passion, and whether or not they receive the approval of others outside of the professions, I will continue to follow my heart after both professions” (Business freelance T/I, Degrees in Arts, Science and Communications, Australia; 21+ years).

## Conclusion

The T/I perception of their own world in this survey is clearly that of the satisfied professional, at times deeply attached to the text. Their voluntary servitude does seem to be a prominent part of their world. At the same time, when asked to focus on the wider reality they become acutely aware that they lack societal recognition, and that translators, in particular, lack status. They are also concerned about deprofessionalization from the cowboys but not (yet) from IT. Yet, there is not really much mention or apparent awareness regarding wider professional autonomy or many of the key traits deemed necessary for the transformation of an occupation into a profession. In fact, control of output and its use in wider society is hardly mentioned, nor is the need for a recognized body of T/I knowledge (rather than practice) or professional certification/qualifications.

It would appear that the T/I group surveyed are focused on their local realities, their immediate, and very individual, developmental paths, and focused very much on the text. There is little sign of the mediator or activist, or of the HAP consultant living in the same world as their client. Hence, academic theory is out of sync with this reality, and for the moment we still have an occupation rather than a fully fledged profession.

Given the clearly entrenched (and satisfied) LAP world of the ‘translator,’ and the low interest in theory and qualifications, it might be worthwhile not to attempt to change that reality but to create a new one (see Katan 2007). Hence, the ‘translator’ (rather than the interpreter) might remain a text-centered LAP occupation while a new broader HAP role could be carved out for the professional language provider, localizer, versioner, or practitioner responsible with, or instead of, the client for output *during* and *after* submission. This would-be profession, at present in search of a galvanizing name, would be based on the interpreters (and the relatively few) translators who have a HAP status, and on those who, for example, are recognized as Language Providers, Localizers or Cultural Interpreters.

Importantly, a further missing aspect of the trait theory could be filled by now providing a career structure whereby ‘translator’ is the way-stage occupation for those qualified as yet unnamed professionals working towards their HAP status in the world of language provision.

## Notes

\* This paper contains both new material and revisions to research originally published in *Hermes* 42, 111–153 under the title “Translation Theory and Professional Practice: A Global Survey of the Great Divide.”

1. For much of this paper I will not distinguish between the two roles as many respondents both translate and interpret, and at times will use “translation” as an umbrella term.
2. For the purposes of this paper I will presume that “translation studies” and “translation theory” are synonymous.
3. The “SurveyMonkey” site was used ([www.monkeysurvey.com](http://www.monkeysurvey.com)), which allows one to compile a questionnaire online using a default template. “SurveyMonkey” also offers a number of simple filtering options to analyse the data.
4. For example, ticking “translation lecturer” as both 1st/full time role and 3rd “also “role.”
5. [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=ExZZsViX8IBbhuxXqYkXKw\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=ExZZsViX8IBbhuxXqYkXKw_3d_3d)
6. The actual T/I group number is smaller (622) due to the number of mixed roles.
7. There are also over two million Google references, mainly from professionals, explaining the different abilities, personalities and trainings necessary to specialize as practitioners either as translators or interpreters.
8. “Correspondence table NACE Rev. 1.1 — NACE Rev. 2”, p.46. <http://circa.europa.eu/irc/dsis/nacecpacon/info/data/en/Correspondence%20table%20NACE%20Rev.%201.1%20-%20NACE%20Rev.%202%20doc%20format.pdf>.
9. For example, [http://www.aegistrad.fr/mentions\\_legales.aspx](http://www.aegistrad.fr/mentions_legales.aspx).
10. 1153 replied to the question on training.
11. This trait approach definition is extremely popular, and is cited 1700 times on Google specifically related to the authors’ names.

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## Attitudes to role, status and professional identity in interpreters and translators with Chinese in Shanghai and Taipei

Robin Setton and Alice Guo Liangliang

China's sudden emergence as a major player in the global economy has generated enormous new demand for translation and interpreting. With the development of formal training, certification and research activity, both mainland China and Taiwan are seeing the first signs of professionalization. This article reports the findings of a survey, the first of its kind, on patterns of professional practice, self-perceptions, job satisfaction and aspirations of translators and interpreters in Shanghai and Taipei and their perceptions of their role and contribution at a time when English and Chinese look set to become the languages of the twenty-first century. In terms of professional identity, most respondents choose the generic term 翻译 *fanyi* ('translation') to describe their main occupation, with slightly more specification among interpreters (as 口译 *kouyi*, 'interpreter'). Only a small minority are members of professional associations. Job satisfaction is high, particularly among interpreters, who enjoy higher status. Views about training, testing and certification are mixed. Attitudes to loyalty, neutrality, toning-down and other role-related norms appear to be close to the international professional consensus, pending future contrastive studies; most respondents express a down-to-earth attitude to their role and contribution to society, down-playing 'cultural mediation.' The survey was planned and conducted as a practical introductory exercise in the methodologies of interpreting studies within the PhD program at the Graduate Institute of Interpretation and Translation (GIIT) of Shanghai International Studies University (SISU).

**Keywords:** translators, interpreters, Chinese, professionalization, professional identity



## Introduction

In the past two centuries, but especially the last two decades, the Chinese and English-speaking worlds have come into accelerated contact after a long history of relatively sparse communication and exchange. Punctuated by periods of intense activity as China absorbed foreign doctrines and knowledge — Buddhism from the Han to Tang dynasties, and ‘Western learning’, then the Marxist-Leninist canon, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries — translation had been primarily a literary pursuit, while interpreting, as far as records show, was confined until modern times mainly to contacts with vassal states, occasional excursions further afield (Zhenghe’s fifteenth-century expeditions in the Indian Ocean), and later, the formal diplomatic sphere. Today, as China hosts world events and expands its diplomatic presence and economic influence, the scope of translation and interpreting has broadened abruptly into technology, big business, and especially since China’s accession to WTO, world trade.

The linguistic mediators between these societies are therefore a valid focus of inquiry. This study, probably the first of its kind, was necessarily modest and exploratory in its aims and coverage. Given the relatively recent emergence and recognition of translation and interpreting as distinct professions, it was natural to look for this small emerging community of relatively autonomous practitioners (with the promise of a viable response rate) near the sources of budding professionalization through lists of alumni of new training programs and of practitioners in or around business centers familiar to the authors, Shanghai and Taipei, which could be considered fairly representative of the level of current activity.

On both Taiwan and the mainland, government and business discovered the need for quality translation and interpreting rather suddenly as both sides of the straits emerged from command economies in the 1980s. On the mainland, translation and interpreting (T&I) activity expanded rapidly as ‘reform and opening-up’ evolved into the ‘socialist market economy’ from the 1990s and moved into a higher gear with WTO accession in 2002. Demand for conference interpreting came first from the United Nations and was met initially by government interpreter-translators, some of whom have now gone partly freelance and have been joined by professional conference interpreters, trained first by the UN (from 1979 to 1995) then in an growing number of university-based postgraduate programs. The scope and volume of text translation has also expanded rapidly, and on both sides of the straits T&I have attracted unprecedented interest and some degree of official recognition; professional or academic T&I associations have emerged, and a few dozen interpreters have joined the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC). In Taiwan, a ‘little tiger’ since the 1980s and a key exporter of strategic semi-finished and consumer goods, the authorities approved the establishment

of the first postgraduate T&I training program at a private university in 1988,<sup>1</sup> followed by several more, including programs based at public universities.<sup>2</sup>

Alongside the emerging community of freelance translators and interpreters, in-house staff in private and public corporations who often do both translation and interpreting in addition to their other primary duties, probably perform the bulk of routine translation and interpreting activity in China. Mixed freelance/in-house practice has also been fairly common, at least during this transitional period (Dawrant and Jiang 2001).

In addition to the diplomas offered by the new training programs, official certification exams for translators and interpreters are already in place in Taiwan after several years of intensive government-funded research (see Liu and Luo 2005). On the mainland, certification schemes are still limited and experimental; examples include CATTI, a test required for promotion within the civil service but also open to other applicants, and various locally-based certificates offered by universities and other institutions (e.g., the Shanghai Interpreters Accreditation (SIA)) with varying degrees of recognition by private or government recruiters.

The literature on translators' and interpreters' attitudes to their role, status or identity, or on the process of professionalization, is rather sparse (see Pöchhacker 2004) and virtually non-existent in or regarding China. One useful benchmark is Tseng's (1992) model of professionalization, based on his observation of the emerging T&I community in Taiwan, as a three-stage interaction between key factors. In the first, training programs are established, a professional association may emerge, and a growing consensus and commitment to the profession develop as it builds its reputation through interaction between clients and the public at large. The second stage sees lobbying for legal recognition and calls for standardization and certification. In a final stage, the new profession achieves protection of its status and official licensure. However, while these are all clearly key factors, their importance seems to vary by market segment, and perhaps also, for cultural and historical reasons, among regions. Professionalization is probably most advanced in conference interpreting, and emergent in court interpreting, but is less clearly structured in translation. Specialized training courses, and image enhancement via media exposure or improved quality, both seem to benefit professionalization everywhere; whereas government-approved certification, now well underway in Taiwan, is markedly absent in Europe, and is not being vigorously promoted on the Chinese mainland. Legal recognition and protection, despite years of lobbying, still seem remote even for conference interpreting.

Several interacting themes recur in discussions about professionalism: trust; fidelity, neutrality or loyalty; quality; and reputation, status or image. Such iconic notions and their interaction are sensitive to cultural, social and historical context, and we certainly cannot generalize as to an 'Eastern' model any more than

we can a ‘Western’ one. Kondo (1988) cites several factors working against the status of interpreters in Japan, including a traditional resistance to imported foreign concepts, a greater reverence for the written language than for the spoken, a general cultural bias against eloquence, reflected in a lack of education in speaking skills; and a social bias against freelancing — in Japan, the unit or company dominates, the individual’s function (as a translator or interpreter) is secondary and may change, and identity is defined by the group not by skills. In China, by contrast, eloquence has traditionally been admired, and speaking skills are widely encouraged and practiced in university competitions. Moreover, freelancing has returned with the country’s emergence from a command economy, followed by a transitional period in which many translator-interpreters had kept at least one foot in a work-unit or institutional base, while others, notably in the diplomatic service, have traditionally acted as interpreters only temporarily, as a stepping stone to a diplomatic career.

The underlying cultural determinants of translation norms, such as neutrality, impartiality and loyalty, may be different in Asian and European traditions (see Rudvin 2007) — although Gelke (2009), for example, has found that ‘intra-European’ interpreters also engage in face-saving adjustments, see themselves as cultural mediators, and hold opinions that vary widely between ‘sourcerer’ and ‘targeteer’ stances (Newmark 1991: 4), ranging from “a clear position against corrections and changes to the ST of any kind” to the principle that “correction and adaptations are necessary but depend on the situation” (Gelke 2009: 122–3, our translation). Economic conditions and changing market demand, too, may favor a different or less marked segmentation into sub-genres of translation and interpreting than in Europe (Gile 2006: 21–23). Finally, all these factors probably interact with one another. For example, the rise of freelancing and professional training may lead to changes in the perception of norms like impartiality and fidelity. These considerations motivated our preliminary investigation into the attitudes, perceptions and norms of Chinese-English translators and interpreters.

## Hypotheses

An exploratory study cannot test hypotheses in the strict sense but only try to probe some assumptions and expectations, based on informal observation. For example:

- We expected currently active practitioners to have a younger profile than their European counterparts.

- We wished to explore the extent of and interplay between freelance and in-house (work unit-based) practice among trained professionals, and its possible relationship to norms regarding allegiance or neutrality.
- We hoped to learn about attitudes to professionalization and its possible corollaries, such as training and certification, or enrolment in professional associations; and more generally, the extent of commitment to translation or interpretation as a profession, as distinct from a ‘springboard’ or stepping-stone to some other, perhaps more glamorous or better recognized occupation.
- We expected translators and interpreters’ exposure to the cultures of their respective working languages to be much more unequal than in Europe.
- We were interested in perceptions of the translator’s role (as cultural mediator or more neutral linguistic conduit, for example), and more generally, in probing translation norms in this population, including beliefs about loyalty or allegiance, face-saving intervention, and ‘toning-down.’ Given the historical and political context, existing stereotypes about East Asian and Chinese cultures, and informal impressions gathered in the classroom, we expected evidence of a tendency to tone down certain forms of criticism of individuals or collectives (group, company, client, nation).
- Finally, we hoped to gather initial insights into other norms and general self-perceptions among Chinese-English translators and interpreters.

Our ultimate aim was to present descriptive results that might suggest general patterns, illustrated where relevant by respondents’ comments. To attempt generalizations, even tentative, about distinctive features of this population would obviously require control surveys on equivalent groups, either in developed markets (such as Europe) or other emerging markets (e.g., Brazil).

## Methods

The method adopted was a questionnaire with semi-open, multiple-choice questions, designed to collect basic demographic data while allowing respondents to add their own options, comments or opinions. Demographic and quantitative data served to draw the contours of the sample, assess its representativity of the underlying population, identify natural sub-divisions (interpreters vs. translators, in-house staff vs. freelancers, part-timers vs. those who depend on translation for their livelihood), and generally to establish a context for respondents’ comments. Despite the analytical challenge, this semi-structured approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data, is fruitful for an exploratory study but also delicate. Comments and anecdotes may be more interesting than numbers, and may help

us to understand the distribution of all responses but must not be given more than their due statistical weight in quantitative terms.

This survey could only aim to study a small fraction of the whole population of individuals engaged in Chinese-English translation — necessarily the most autonomous and responsive segment and, in practice, probably the most trained, professionalized and committed. The rest of the iceberg, however, will remain difficult to circumscribe given the well-known fragmentation of these professions (Pöckhacker 2004: 159 ff.), the large volume of activity, the blurred boundary between T & I and other activities, such as consultancy, diplomacy, advocacy or escorting, the private nature of much translation and interpreting activity, the evanescent nature of interpreting (no recorded products), the lack of compulsory certification and registration, the embryonic state of associations and the relatively recent establishment of training programs, and the emergent status of the profession in general.

### *The Questionnaire Survey*

The questionnaire comprised five sections. Section A elicited demographic data (age, sex, domicile, etc.). Section B explored professional identity. Questions B1–9, which were designed to classify respondents as primarily translators or interpreters, inquired as to the mode and pattern of practice (translation vs. interpreting, part-time vs. full time), freelance vs. staff ('in-house') status, languages, specialization, association membership, etc., while questions B10–14 inquired as to job satisfaction, status perceptions and aspirations, and views on measures potentially beneficial to the profession, such as training and certification. Section C probed attitudes regarding norms such as loyalty and face-saving, and Section D, cultural or national affinities. A final question (E) invited reactions to the questionnaire itself.

Successive drafts were discussed in PhD classes at SISU and with one or two professional and research colleagues, then tested on two respondents in each city, one English and one Chinese native speaker respectively, roughly representative of different specializations and employment status (T vs. I, freelance vs. in-house). Several questions were revised, deleted or added after the trial, but unfortunately one (D1 on 'my native language') turned out to be ambiguous, hence unusable.

### *Procedure and Sampling*

Questionnaires (Appendix A) were sent out with a choice of three versions (English, Simplified Chinese and Traditional Chinese) to the following email lists: T&I postgraduate training program alumni;<sup>3</sup> AIIC members in China;<sup>4</sup> in-house staff and freelancers used by various T&I recruiters in Shanghai and Taiwan; and Shanghai Government staff. Allowing for duplication and non-delivery, it was estimated

that about 250 questionnaires reached their targets. Respondents were invited to reply within a week, after which a reminder was sent. This generated about a third of the final sample. 30 Beijing and Hong Kong addressees were added, few of whom were known to the researchers. However, the response was negligible and there was no time to send a reminder, so this sample was ignored. The lead author was probably known by name to an estimated 60–70% of the addressees and 90% of the respondents; one small group of addressees (in the Shanghai municipal government) was encouraged to reply by their supervisor. Notoriety therefore seems to have had a significant effect on response rates in this population.

### *Response Rates and Representativity*

Sixty-two completed questionnaires were received, all but two of which were usable. This overall response rate of approximately 20–25% hid significant differences. Lists for Shanghai residents were more up-to-date and reliable, with very few duplicates or failures, and 33 responses were received for an estimated 80 successful mailings, or 41%. The number of conference interpreters (main source of income) in Shanghai was estimated by local recruiters at about 50, of whom we successfully polled 22. The response from Taiwan was estimated at 17% (29 out of 170 estimated recipients).

## **Results**

### *Classification of ‘Translators’ and ‘Interpreters’*

Questions B1 and B2 inquired as to how respondents would define themselves professionally, while B3–B4 elicited the proportion of time spent on and income earned from written translation and interpreting, respectively. These responses were used to sub-divide the sample into groups — interpreters, translators, and ‘part-timers’ — with distribution of time, then income, as the primary criteria (if time was shared 50/50 between T and I, then income breakdown was considered). We then took into account self-perception (B1–B2) and explanatory comments. Finer gradations were noted for reference (e.g., “interpreting with (some/very little) written translation”). This produced the following breakdown:

23 out of 27 (85%) of those classified as interpreters also did some translation, as compared to 13 out of 23 translators who sometimes did interpreting (48%).

As expected from the bias inherent in the mailing lists, respondents fell roughly into two categories: (conference) interpreters in Shanghai (most with some secondary activity in written translation), and translators in Taiwan.

**Table 1.** Interpreters, Translators and Part-timers

Category	Main criterion	N=	Total
<b>I: Interpreter</b>	I > 85% of time (100% I: 4)	17	27
I with [some/(-)] T	I > 65% of time or income	10	
<b>T: (Written) Translator</b>	T > 95% time or income (100% T: 10)	12	23
T with [some/(-)] I	T > 70% of time or income	11	
<b>PT: Part-time translator and/or interpreter</b>	T + I < 50% of total income	9	12
S: T/I as sideline	T+I < 20% of time or income	3	
<b>Total</b>			<b>62</b>

Representativity was thus better for Shanghai interpreters than for Taiwan translators, based on the available estimates of the underlying populations, obtained either from local recruiters (for Shanghai and Taipei-based interpreters) or official sources (for Taiwan-based translators and interpreters, the 2003 Survey of the Translation and Interpretation Industry (STII)), both of which afforded only an indicative picture of the current reality: the former was up-to-date but unofficial, the latter six years old. The STII (Taiwan) can only give fragmentary estimates (Table 2), and confirms the part-time and temporary nature of most T & I activity.

**Table 2.** Estimates of T & I Populations in Taiwan. Sources: STII (2003) and Local Recruiters (2009)

Taiwan	Software localization	Radio & TV post-production	Other media	Agencies	Total
STII 2003:					
All freelance translators/ interpreters <sup>5</sup>					2,000–3,000
Full-time (& part time) in-house translators	135 (30)	44 (0)	127 (full-time news editor-translators)	36 (0)	~ 250
Freelance interpreters: (estimate, incl. escort)					53
In-house interpreters					N/A
Freelance conference interpreters					30–40
Conference interpreters (main income)					12

**Table 3.** Freelance Interpreters in Taiwan: Activities as % of Gross Income by Language Combination (STII 2003)

Languages	Interpreting	Written translation	Teaching	Other sources
English-Chinese interpreters	51%	15.2%	21.3%	12.5%
Japanese-Chinese interpreters	56.3%	18.3%	9%	16.5%
Other	25.7%	6.7%	1.7%	66%

For example, publishers employ only-part-time specialized personnel who are in or en route to another profession, and the 38 'freelance interpreters' interviewed for the STII declare interpreting as their main activity but all also have other sources of income, mostly written translation and/or teaching.

As these tables show, in Taiwan very few if any individuals earn a living from interpreting alone.

### *Section A: Demographics*

Data were collected on age, gender, nationality and ethnic origin, current domicile and time spent abroad. Mean age for the sample (N = 59) was 36.3, median 35.5; but interpreters were significantly younger (mean 35.5, median 27.5) than translators (mean 36.4, median 35.5), and much younger than AIIC members (estimated mean age 49). Women made up 57% (31 to 23) of the total sample (N = 54), but gender was almost exactly balanced within each of the two main groups, translators and interpreters (a sharp contrast with AIIC's 75% female membership), with more women among the few part-timers.

Data on nationality, ethnic origin, residence, working languages and time spent abroad were collated with the choice of questionnaire language to determine the geographical and linguistic distribution of the sample, and respondents' exposure to the culture(s) of their acquired language. Although fourteen respondents chose to reply in English, probably only four or five were native English speakers, three being citizens of English-speaking countries. Most respondents lived either in Shanghai (33: 53%) or Taiwan (25, of whom 16 were in Taipei). Forty-four of the sixty-two respondents (= 71%) had apparently never spent a year or more outside their home country.

These results confirmed the difficulty of separating translators and interpreters, part-timers from full-timers, etc. In all, the survey captured a sample of translators and interpreters working chiefly between English and Chinese, mostly trained at the postgraduate level, and therefore of relatively high and better-defined status, younger and better paid as compared to the total translating and interpreting population.



## Section B: Professional Identity

### Self-definition (B1 and B2)

Responses to question B1 had to be counted separately for the Chinese and English language questionnaires, since Chinese 翻译 *fanyi* is a more generic 'default' term for translators and interpreters than is 'translator' in English, and thus has no exact English equivalent, while the English 'translator-interpreter' and the Chinese 笔译 *biyi* (= 'written translator') and 口译 *kouyi* (= 'oral translator') would all be perceived as unusually specific job-descriptions. Among Chinese-language respondents, 42% (22/53) chose *fanyi*, including nearly half of the translators (11/23) and just over a third of the interpreters (10/27), whereas only seven respondents (three interpreters and four translators respectively) chose the more specific *biyi* or *kouyi*. Six respondents to the English-language questionnaire, plus one respondent to a Chinese-language questionnaire specified 'translator-interpreter' in English — making a total of 29 respondents (47% of the sample, or 58% if we excluded part-timers) who gave a generic or combined ('T-I') statement of their occupation. The clearest finding to emerge was that interpreters were more likely to choose a specific description ('interpreter') than were translators.

Nearly half of the respondents (30/62, or 48.4%) said their answers to questions about their profession would not change with context. Others (21/62 = 33.9%) said their answers might vary depending on who was asking and their level of interest or knowledge, or on possible professional opportunities, such as when socializing with conference interpretation users or professional conference interpreters (7: 11.3%). Six (9.7%) would specify or differentiate (four between 'translator' and 'interpreter') depending on the degree of formality or detail of the context. Two explained that 'translator/interpreter' was not usually listed as an option on forms, and so one would check 'services' or 'self-employed.' Another said 'translator' to English native speakers, but specified 'translator-rewriter' to 'most' Chinese speakers; while still another gave different answers because s/he had other responsibilities aside from translation/interpretation. Three would reply 'self-employed/translator' (2) or 'teacher', and one merely said that it depended on the situation.

Among the 27 (pure or primary) interpreters, 11 chose 'interpreter/*kouyi*', ten chose '*fanyi*' including six who did little or no written translation, and four who chose 'translator-interpreter' in the English questionnaire, all of whom did 20–40% written translation work. Of those who did 75% or more interpreting, half (11/22) chose 'interpreter.' The 23 full-time or primarily text translators in the sample nearly all declared themselves to be either *fanyi* or, in English, when they did over 25% interpreting, 'translator-interpreter' (but so did two who did little or no interpreting). Three translators with some secondary interpreting activity chose 'interpreter.' The 12 respondents for whom T/I was only a part-time or

sideline occupation all declared their main occupation in answer to B2 — which included teaching (often related to T&I), civil service, foreign relations, financial analysis, publishing and PR — but four of them added ‘translator’ (and in one case also ‘interpreter’), while two explained that they mentioned their translation activity when among other translators. Only two interpreters, of whom one was probably in-house, and one translator, declared a different primary profession (‘foreign relations’ and ‘teacher’), but they all added that they would clarify if asked.

### *Training (B5)*

Due mainly to the sampling method, most respondents had received interpreter training, and 45/62 (73%) had been (or were being (2)) trained in interpretation at the postgraduate level. Only one (1.6%) stated (s)he had ‘no’ training. Six (9.7%) had received formal on-the-job training in the form of a short-term crash course in consecutive interpreting organized by the Foreign Affairs Office of Shanghai Municipal Government. Three (4.8%) had received informal on-the-job training, either ‘language training’ or self-taught (2). Four (6.5%) cited undergraduate training in interpreting (2) or languages (2), while two (3.2%) simply cited academic training or training in an academic institution. Thirty-seven respondents (60% of the sample) had attended or graduated from either GITIS-FJU<sup>6</sup> (of which the lead author was a former Director) or GIIT-SISU (Shangwai)<sup>7</sup> (the authors’ home institute).

Among translators (23), 18 (70%) cited postgraduate training (not yet completed in two cases), one specifying ‘with diploma in interpreting,’ one citing years of experience *before* training. Only two (9%) mentioned undergraduate (language) training, of whom one also cited experience and in-house supervision and guidance, and another, the Shanghai government course.

Of the interpreters (27), 22 (81%) had post-graduate training, one specifying ‘passed diploma’; but interestingly, none specified T or I. Three more replied ‘academic institution’ (1) or ‘undergraduate training’ (one T and one I). Among part-timers (12), five cited postgraduate training, though none specified its outcome; five mentioned the Shanghai government course. Three (25%) mentioned language undergraduate studies. Only one — a ‘sideliner’ — said ‘no’ training (the same respondent who throughout the questionnaire derided training and the whole idea of translation as a profession).

### *Associations (B6)*

Very few respondents were members of a professional association when polled. 51 out of 62 (82.3%) replied ‘no’ to this question and another only joined an artists and creators’ association ‘for healthcare purposes.’ Of the nine (13%) who replied ‘yes,’ four Shanghai interpreters were members of an international association,

AIIC (there were 13 AIIC members in Shanghai altogether, but three were involved in piloting or designing the survey and therefore were not polled) and five were members of local or national associations (STA, SIA [Shanghai], IOL [UK], TATI [Taiwan]). One was a member of both AIIC and TAC.<sup>8</sup> One part-time translator based in Taiwan was a member of the local association, TATI, but not a single Taiwan resident living mainly from translation was. Only one respondent left the question unanswered.

#### *Languages and Combinations (B7)*

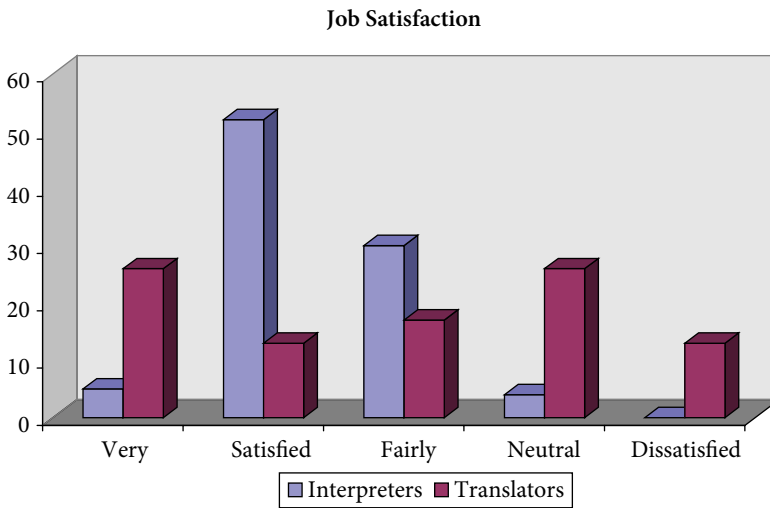
Most of the respondents (47/62: 75.8%) worked both ways, all between English and Chinese except one (French-Chinese). All the interpreters worked both ways. Of the 23 translators, seven (30%) worked into one language only, as did two of the 12 part-timers: four worked exclusively from English to Chinese, and five, exclusively from Chinese to English. Two respondents (3.2%) with mixed activities worked both ways in interpreting but only one way in written translation. Only three respondents (4.8%) cited a third active or passive working language.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Generalist vs. Specialist (B8)*

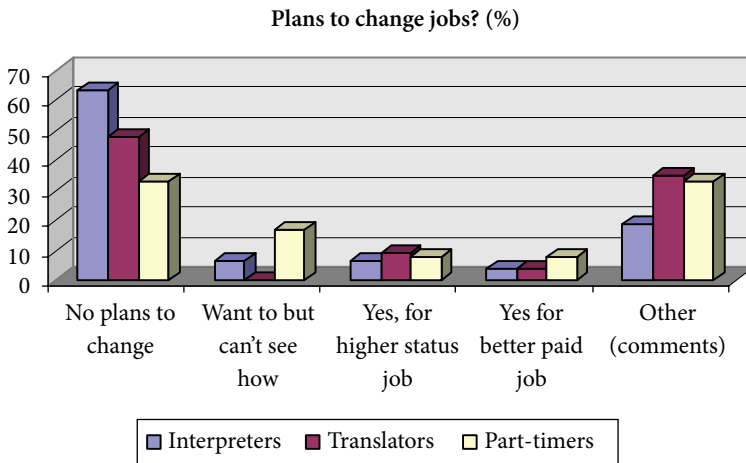
Most respondents (49/62: 79.0%) considered themselves generalists. Among interpreters, 22/27 (78%) were generalists, though one commented that “*everybody has at least some topics which they are good at.*” Five reported a specialization, two specifying the domain (‘economics and finance’, and ‘MBA courses and related topics’). Six of the 23 translators (26%) were specialists, citing domains such as law (2), law and novels (1), finance and economics (2), and “focused” (1); the rest were generalists. The 18 in-house workers (6 I, 8 T and 5 PT) included all six of the specialist translators, the rest being ‘generalists’. Of 29 freelancers (19 I, 10 T, 4 PT), only three were specialists.

#### *Freelancer vs. In-house Staff (B9)*

Nearly half of the respondents (29/62, 47%; 14/27 interpreters, 14/23 translators) were freelancers. 18 (29%) worked as ‘in-house’ staff in a company or an administrative unit. Fifteen (24%), mostly in Shanghai (12), had both staff and freelance work, and of the ten who specified a proportion of staff vs. freelance work, all but one worked more for their main employers than on the open market (four 90% or more, two 80/20%, two 70/30%, two 60/40% and one 50/50%). In Taiwan, the three respondents with mixed staff/freelance activity were all English native speakers.



B10: Respondents seemed largely satisfied with their lot as translators/interpreters. Half (50% exactly) were either 'satisfied' (20/62) or 'very satisfied' (11/62), while 16 (about 25%) were 'fairly satisfied.' Only three respondents checked 'dissatisfied' (e), while ten (about 16%) were neutral (d).



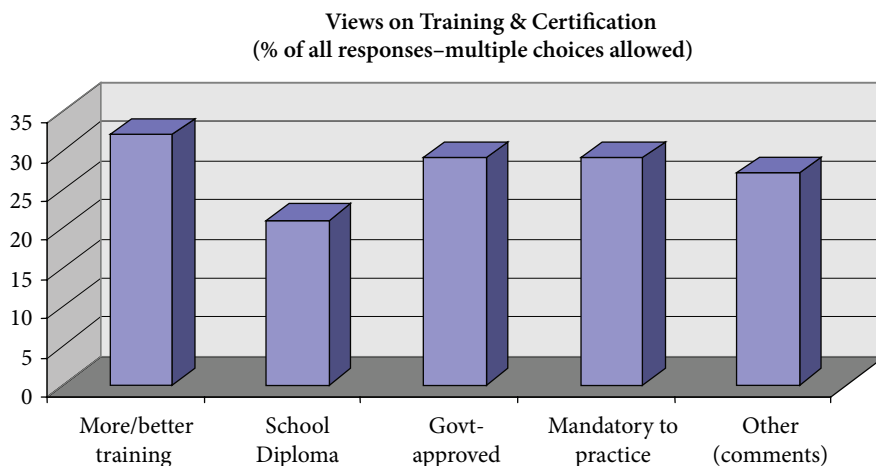
B11: Over 50% of respondents checked 'no plans to change' without further comment. Of the remainder, four 'would change but could not see how'; eight said they would change to a job with higher pay (3) or higher status (5); of the latter, three replied 'teacher' to B14 (status aspirations), and one, 'lawyer.' Among the neutral or less satisfied respondents, or those with plans to change, three aspired to a better income, or a higher rate, and three to better status or a more respected occupation, though pay came first. Two saw T/I as a springboard — acquiring

knowledge and experience to prepare for another career — while three wanted to diversify without giving up T/I. Three explained that for them, translation was only a sideline. Of these three, two appreciated what it brought them in knowledge, personal growth, fun and/or income, while one poured scorn on translation generally. Combining B10 and B11, 60% of interpreters and 43% of translators were satisfied and had no plans to change (but 59% vs. 61% if we add “neutral but no plans to change”).

Interpreters were clearly happier with their jobs overall, with 25/27 (93%) in the top three ‘satisfied’ categories, and none ‘dissatisfied.’ Most (17/25: 63%) had no plans to change, and those who did were not desperate, as seen from their comments, in which the ‘springboard’ effect appeared, though not very strongly. One commented that the future might depend on the market; another wanted to “learn new domains to prepare my future career.” Translators expressed some concerns, but only one checked ‘dissatisfied.’ Several would like to diversify or wanted more variety; two had a ‘springboard’ plan; only one wanted to give up translation completely, although of the three or four who aspired to better pay, two would change jobs to get it.

#### *Training and/or Certification as Measures Beneficial to the Profession (B12)*

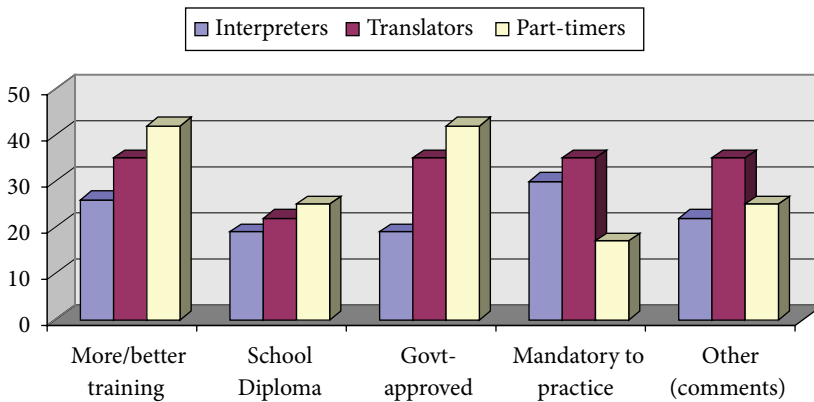
No clear consensus emerged on measures likely to benefit the profession (see chart; multiple responses were allowed).



‘More or better training’ (a) received the most hits (20): eight alone and twelve with other choices, most of which (10) combined (a) with ‘voluntary accreditation by training program diploma’ (b) and/or ‘voluntary, government-approved certification’ (c). Of the single choices, ‘compulsory accreditation to be allowed to practice’ (d) was the most popular: twelve responses in all (19%), of which ten added

no other comment. Three respondents commented here or elsewhere that compulsory accreditation would raise pay and/or status (though one said it had little hope of success); one explicitly included a role for training programs. Only two respondents combined ‘more or better training’ (a) with ‘compulsory accreditation’ (d). Five comments clarified or adjusted the definition in the question, three of them specifying “better training (quality), not more training (quantity).”

Views on Training & Certification (by specialisation, %)



Several comments seemed to value apprenticeship/mentoring or experience over formal training. One translator observed that “the main qualification should be real ability gained through experience — whether for T or I, a certificate is usually only a tool for getting jobs or positions.” Another commented: “I define ‘training’ as obtaining corrective and prescriptive recommendations from a more experienced translator. Exam-based testing invites exam-based ‘learning’, the efficacy and utility of which is limited.”

‘Certification by training programs’ (b) alone (with a professional diploma exam) was the least popular choice, with only 11 responses but 18 when combined, e.g., with (a) (training) and (c) (government-approved testing) (4). Option (c) was the second most popular, with no comment when chosen alone. Nine respondents combined (a) (training) with (b) (school diploma) and/or (c) (government-approved testing). Three respondents (two I and one T) advocated (b) with (c), i.e., “Professional Diploma exams administered by training programs with the mandate of powerful official (government) bodies.” Another suggested that “authorities should mandate training institutions meeting professional standards of training to administer exams and confer professional certification,” while another called for “certification by any credible body, official or not.” Other responses included “good connections,” “internal/professional unity/solidarity,” or “avoiding price wars.”

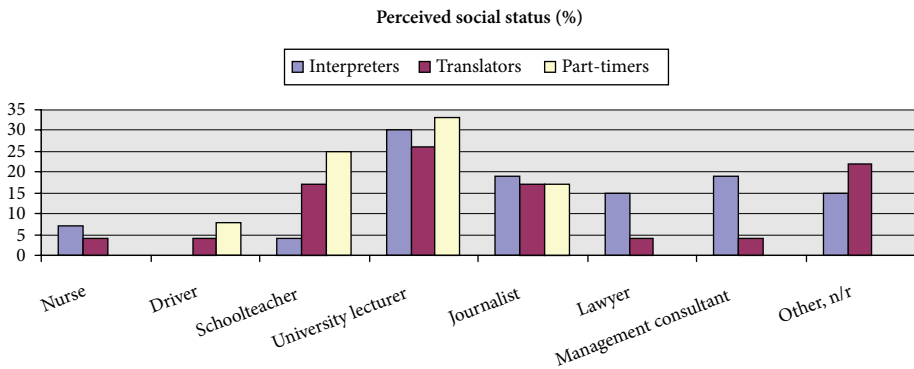
Translators were almost twice as likely as interpreters (35% vs. 18.5%) to be in favor of government-approved certification tests. Almost a third of all respondents were for mandatory certification — i.e., 35% (8/23) of the translators are for protection of the profession by compulsory certification for access to practice, and 30% (8/27) of the interpreters. Four translators, but no interpreters, favored school diplomas in addition to government certification. No respondent, despite the invitation, proposed different arrangements for translators and interpreters, but one translator differentiated between qualification requirements by genres, calling for “official (compulsory) accreditation for specialized (e.g. business, legal) translation, [but] no restriction for domains with no set standards, like literary translation.”

Translators, but no interpreters, stressed experience and practice, or on-the-job learning through apprenticeship, as alternative or additional bases for qualification. Part-timers were more skeptical of both training and certification and more likely to mention other factors in success, such as “good connections,” “practical knowledge,” “raising the client’s awareness and respect.” Further comments were offered in the ‘feedback’ section: B12 was “hard to answer”; choices were limited. One interpreter, who checked (c), observed that: “In the absence of mandatory licensing, anyone with some knowledge of a foreign language can go [and] be an interpreter. A lot of the time, clients can’t judge quality. This situation is bad for the development of the profession; competence is not rewarded.”

### *Perceptions of Present Status (B13)*

Every respondent attempted a reply, though some said they found the question difficult. Just over a third of respondents (22: 35%) saw an interpreter’s status (or a translator’s, for 18 respondents, or 27%) as closest to that of a university lecturer. One Taiwan-based respondent explained: “[...]because so many translators and interpreters in Taiwan are also university lecturers.” About half as many (10: 16%) chose ‘journalist’ (8:13%) for T/Is generally, and two more specified translators or interpreters respectively. A similar number (9) saw translators as close to (middle-)school teachers (but only seven agreed for interpreters).

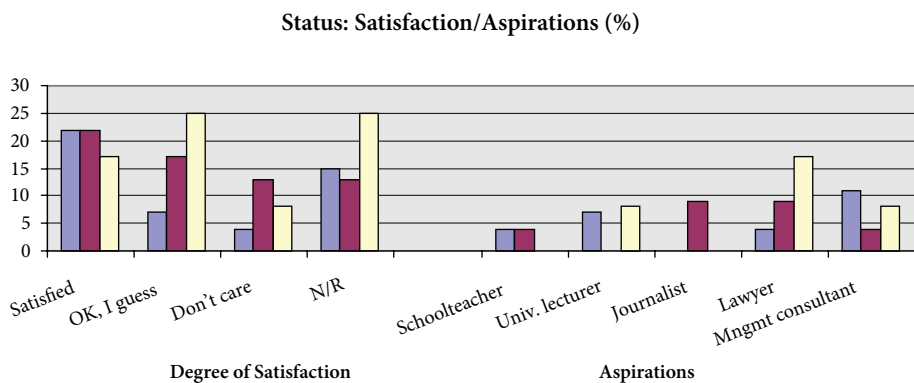
The consensus seemed to be, both in responses and comments, that interpreters enjoyed higher status. Twelve respondents (19%) saw interpreters as close to lawyers or management consultants (six and six replies, respectively), but only eight of them (three and five respectively) made these choices for T/Is generally. Seven respondents saw translators’ status as similar to nurses (four of whom made no T/I distinction) or drivers (4). Eight respondents (13%) made an explicit distinction between translators and interpreters — in every case, interpreters were assigned a status from one to four slots higher.



The status issue prompted several voluntary comments. Two noted the extreme variability of the status granted interpreters, depending on the observer's knowledge of the profession: "Those who don't know are very admiring, think we're super high paid; for others we're nothing"; "attitudes [...] range from respectful, seeing us as 'professionals or experts' (these people have usually heard about our graduate institutes), to questions like 'how can you make a living from this' [...]" Basically, those in the know grant us higher status."

Others complained; for example (from an English native speaker), "in China it seems Chinese-English translation is a job anybody can do as long as they have basic English and their rate is low enough"; another was scornful: "[...] ditch your self glorification and get real! You need professional knowledge to support your skills." One respondent suggested that status varies with specialization: "Interpreter status is close to university lecturer — organizers often address interpreters as 'teacher' (口译老师 *kouyi laoshi*). Translators are harder to classify — in a translation agency, they are equivalent to other in-house staff; when they translate mainstream books for publishers, then they are closer to journalists or editors."

### Status/Aspirations (B14)





23 respondents (37%) were 'satisfied' with their status, albeit about half of them (11: 18%) with some qualification ("pretty much, basically, ok"); one commented "as long as the pay is enough," while seven others merely said they didn't care about status, it was irrelevant, "the main thing is to enjoy it" (2); or it was "low visibility" anyway, or "I only do it part-time"; ten (16%) gave no answer.

Among dissatisfied respondents, few (12 or 19%; see right side of chart) aspired to any specific status among those given. Four chose 'lawyer, three 'management consultant,' and two more checked both of these; three checked 'university lecturer,' and two 'schoolteacher'; one offered an 'academic-professional' range from (c) to (g). None distinguished T and I; no one wanted to be treated as a nurse or a driver. Some comments expressed disenchantment: "The profession should be respected more. Translators here are paid less than English teachers, 'editors' and 'technical writers'; I do not feel that translators are really part of the knowledge-based economy, it seems like a dead end profession at times."

Some suggested that translators should raise their status by raising their (academic) qualifications; others echoed the notion that status varies with power in different situations: "People's perceptions of interpreters vary wildly. As a rule of thumb, the more people rely on you (both in terms of language and international exposure), the more they admire you [...] my experience also ranges between (a) and (g) [nurse and management consultant] or even between feeling like being a 'slave' and a 'master'!"

Among interpreters, ten were satisfied with their status, but five specifically expressed dissatisfaction, two aspiring to the status of management consultant, one to that of schoolteacher. One felt the profession was over-glorified ('it's just a service, after all'); two aspired to lawyer status (in contrast to their perceived current status, equivalent to 'nurse' or 'journalist' respectively). Three didn't care, one adding that (s)he has other activities; another said "one's never satisfied anyway" while four gave no reply.

Among translators, five were satisfied, four said "ok," three didn't care, while three were explicitly dissatisfied, aspiring to the status of teacher (1), lecturer (2), consultant, or lawyer (3). Of the 12 part-timers, five were satisfied (2–3 "basically" or "more or less"), others aspired to the status of management consultant (2), lawyer (1), or university lecturer (1). Three respondents said status questions were difficult to answer, because (as one said) "different kinds of translators/interpreters have different status. Clients have different expectations of them too. Also, in Shanghai there are a lot of part-timers."

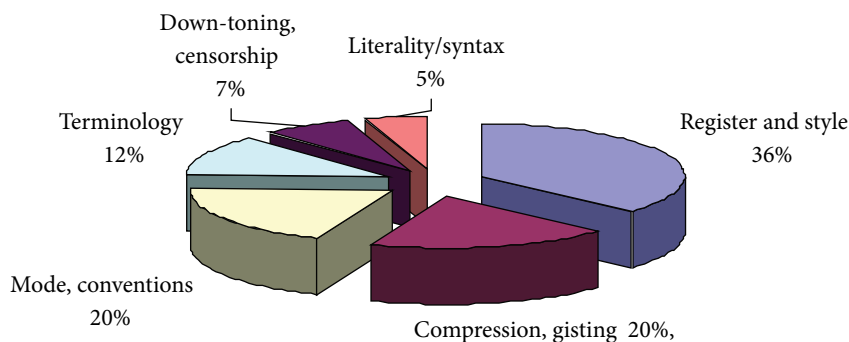
### Section C: Norms and Practices

#### *Client Instructions, Norms, Pressure and Special Demands (C1)*

In C1, respondents were asked if they had ever been given instructions by a client that affected the way they then translated or interpreted. Over a third (26: 41%) checked either 'never' (20) or 'rarely' (+3), or explained why they were not affected (+3). The same number (26: 41%) replied 'yes,' almost all giving examples, which can be classified as follows (see comments below):

- Register and style: 9 (including the use of idioms, formality, solemnity, elegance, trendy style, fluency, liveliness and even dress)
- Compression, gisting or concision: 5
- Terminology: 3 (of which 2 related to the use of Mainland vs. Taiwanese terms)
- Literalness/syntax: 1
- Mode and other conventions, e.g. whispering, speed, synchronicity, short consecutive, third-person: 5
- Down-toning (1) or censorship (1) for some politically sensitive issues.

#### *Client directives*



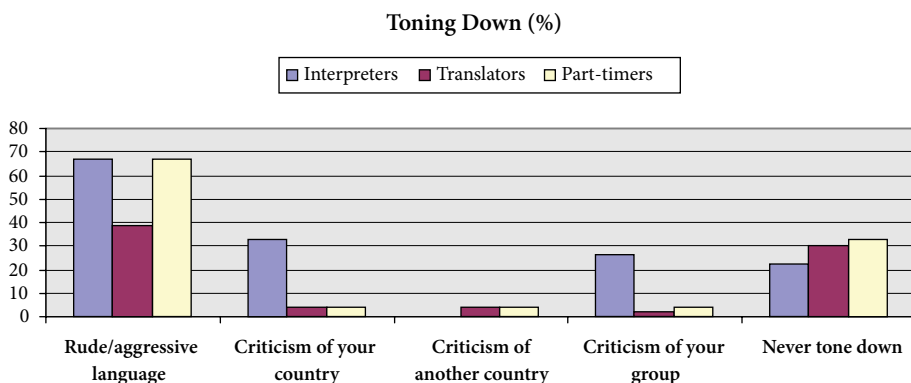
Domains mentioned included fashion and lifestyle, marketing, and officialdom (both government and corporate, typically involving requests for formality, solemnity, elegance).

No less than 13 comments implicitly or explicitly touched on the question of compliance with such directives or suggested conflict with the translator's own norms and judgment. Two respondents said they complied with instructions, two mentioned only their own judgment and norms, while the rest either resisted (3) or complied against their better judgment (6). About 8% clearly suggested grudging compliance while 5% reported resistance to client interference.

*Toning down (C2)*

Over two-thirds of respondents (42/62: 68%) acknowledged toning-down at least sometimes in one of the following cases:

- a. rude or aggressive language: 52%
- b. criticism of one's own country: 19%
- c. criticism of another country: 11%
- d. criticism of one's own institution, company or group: 18%

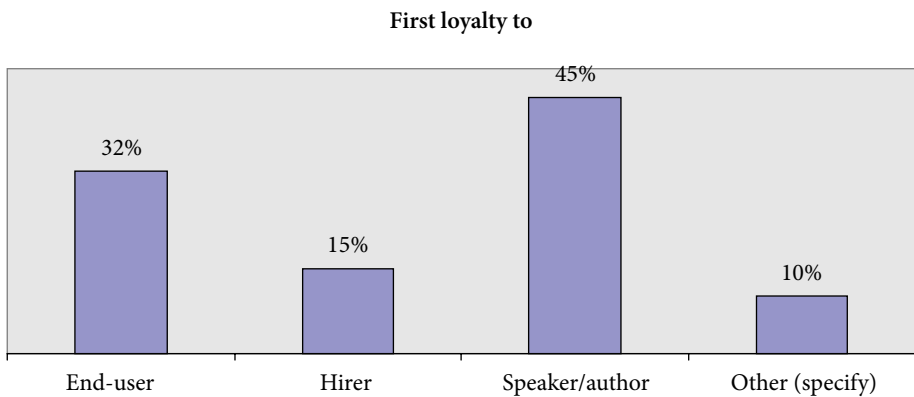


Some also mentioned toning down criticism of the client (1) and coarse or vulgar language (2; one specifying “in novels”); others specified they might tone down “sometimes” (3), rarely or occasionally (1), “depending on circumstances” (2); one toned down compliments to herself. Fifteen checked multiple options, all of which included rude or aggressive language (a). Another fifteen respondents (24%) said they never toned anything down; another two only at the client's request; another “do[es] not tone down, but explain[s]”; another “only correct[s] factual errors.” Two more said they had never encountered the situation, while another denied the existence of the problem.

Interpreters were clearly more likely to tone down than translators. 78% of interpreters might tone down rude or aggressive language, but only 39% of translators might do so. 33.3% of interpreters might tone down criticism of their country, but only 13% of translators. This might be explained by various factors, including the permanence of the written word, the concern to keep a shared atmosphere friendly, the implicit assumption of an interpreter's negotiating role, or the greater visibility of signs of success or failure in mediation in a live situation. It would be interesting to see if these results are supported or disconfirmed by other studies.

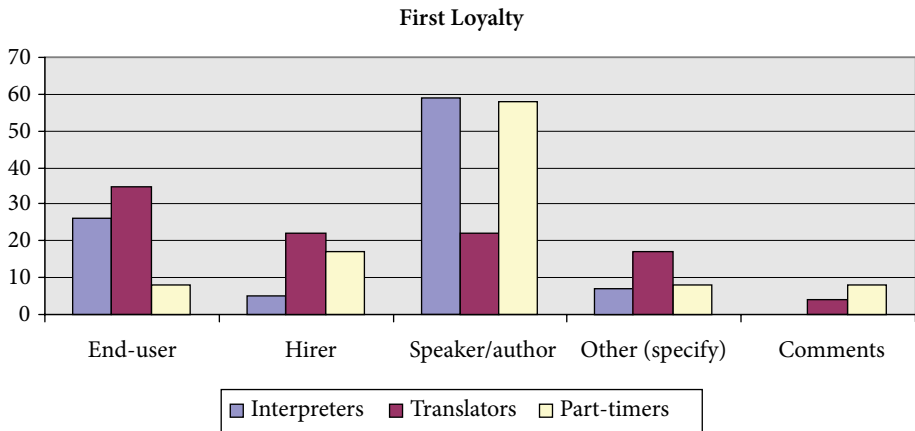
### *Loyalty: Speaker/Author, User, Client or Group (C3)*

This question invited respondents to rank the options in order according to loyalty due. Twenty-eight (45%) put the speaker/author first, of whom thirteen (21%) said their loyalty was to the speaker/author only. The next choice was the end-client or user, with twenty hits (32%), of which four (6%) declared loyalty to the end-user alone. This suggested a predominance of ‘sourcerers’ over ‘targeteers,’ although a significant one-third appeared to lean toward the strong functionalist position of giving priority to the effect of the TT. Nine respondents (15%) put the commissioning client first, two of whom specified explicitly that “the party who is paying [/is ‘the ultimate authority].”



However, 35 respondents (56%) gave multiple ranked answers, and six more (10%) preferred to give their own explanations, or state their own norms, e.g., “self-preservation” (1), “fidelity” (3), “the translator him/herself,” “the translator’s good-faith judgment,” “to do the best job I can”; or they rejected the question entirely. Some made other distinctions, such as:

- “depends on situation. In translation, in the case of a classic work of literature, the author takes priority. In popular literature, the reader takes priority. In interpreting, if the meeting has a mainly informative goal, the audience take priority. In court interpreting, the speaker takes priority.”
- “[these] interests are very hard to discern/separate, so I use ‘readability’ as an index of ‘interest.’ Subject to preserving accuracy of content, I change the phrasing of the text in the interests of greater readability.”
- “for very official or sensitive material, [first] (c) (speaker/author) [then] (b) (commissioning client), [then] (a) (user/end client)”



Interpreters were much more likely to be loyal first or only to the speaker/author: 16/27 (59%) as compared to 5/23 translators (22%). Of these, five interpreters and three translators owed loyalty *only* to the speaker/author. Six translators (26%) declared loyalty first to the commissioning client, but only two interpreters — these were two of the three who worked mostly in-house. A similar percentage (I 37%, T 30%) chose ‘user/end-client.’ Translators gave more complex answers, more often multiple and ranked, and made more comments (examples above).

#### *Translation: Representing or on Behalf of Whom? (C4)*

When asked whom they felt they ‘represent’ or ‘speak/write’ on behalf of when translating, 69% (43/62) chose ‘the speaker/author’ (b). Six (10%) chose ‘the client’ (a) or specified “whoever is paying,” and seven (11%) chose ‘the group you feel you belong to’ (c), two of whom specified “company” and one “hiring organization,” while two more combined (b) and (c); one said “it depends.” Five gave variations on the theme “none of the above — I am neutral/ a third party intermediary,” to which one added “although clients always expect or believe the T/I is speaking on their behalf...” Only two interpreters (7%) — again, these were two of the three part-time staff interpreters — chose ‘the client’ (a); two interpreters and three translators chose ‘the group you belong to’ (c). Again, translators gave somewhat more differentiated answers and comments.

#### *Section D: Cultural Identity, Affinities and Role in Society*

Question D1, about the ‘status of your native language,’ had to be disregarded due to an evident ambiguity (‘status’ in the world vs. in yourself), which had emerged in the pilot but was unfortunately ignored. If this ambiguity is set aside, we may note that over half (52%) of respondents chose ‘enrichment’ or ‘revival, expansion’

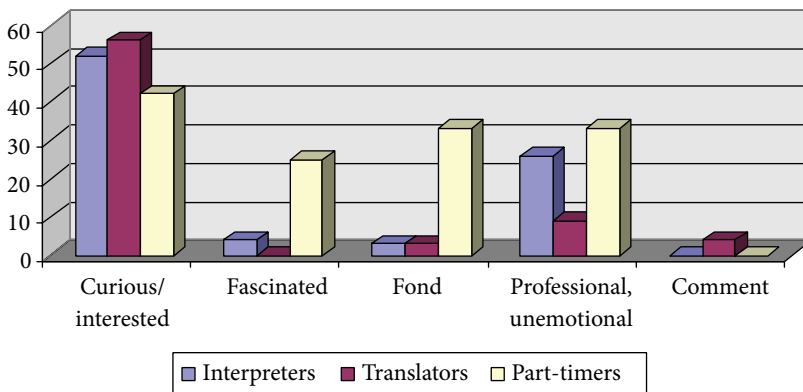
while only four (6%) chose 'decline.' We consider this still reflects an upbeat view of the development of Mandarin Chinese. The response most affected by possible ambiguity was 'contamination, loss of purity' (13: 29%).

#### *Attitude to Civilization and Society of Acquired Language (D2)*

Of the 57 respondents deemed to be native Chinese speakers (acquired language assumed to be English in 95% of cases), 25 (44%) were 'curious, interested' about English-speaking civilization and society, 15 (26%) 'fond' and 13 (23%) 'professional, unemotional.' Only one chose 'fascinated.'

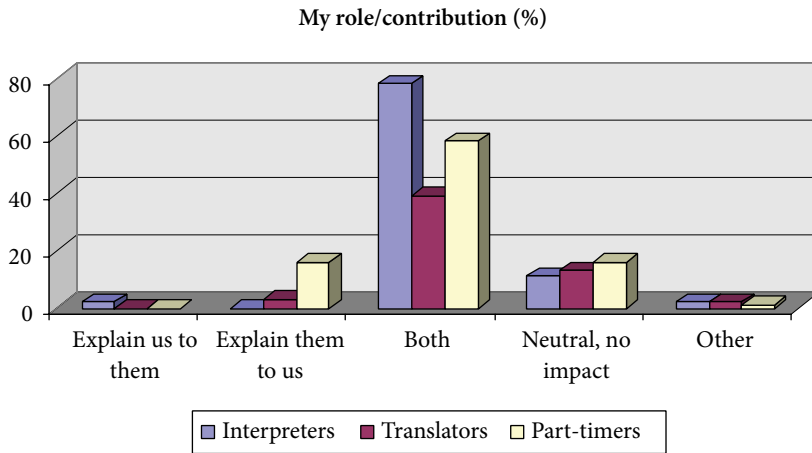
Of the five respondents assumed to be native English speakers, two were 'curious, interested' and another was 'fond' of the culture and society of his/her acquired language. One described his/her attitude as 'professional, unemotional' while another (who regularly and frequently spends time in both cultures) claimed all of the above. There was no visible difference between interpreters and translators.

Attitude to B culture (%)



#### *'My contribution to society as a translator/interpreter' (D3)*

Over half of the respondents (34: 55%) chose (c) alone, i.e., both (a) 'make my culture and its values better known to the rest of the world' and (b) 'make foreign culture and values better known to my compatriots.' None chose (a) alone ('make my culture and its values better known to the rest of the world'), although one chose (a) followed by (b). Ranking of the options was allowed.



Eight respondents (13%) — but no interpreters — chose (b) alone, ‘make foreign culture and values better known to my compatriots,’ in addition to another who made the clarification: “..any English speakers who don’t read Chinese actually — and also facilitating business communication (“I don’t just translate cultural stuff”). Seven respondents (11%) chose (d) alone (‘neutral, no impact’).

All eight of the voluntary additional comments downplayed the “national or cultural dimension” and more soberly stressed the “bridge” or “facilitating communication” function of translation. For example:

- “I facilitate communication for company operations and business development. This doesn’t have much of a national or cultural dimension”
- “I help the users of my interpretation service overcome the language barrier, achieve fluent communication, and realize their communicative goals”
- “I help parties who speak different languages communicate better, contributing to the successful implementation of whatever project they are working on (political, business, academic).”

## Summary and Conclusion

The sample obtained is representative of two sub-groups of T&I practitioners: conference interpreters in Shanghai, and thus perhaps to some degree on the Chinese mainland as a whole since this is one of its two main centers; and to a lesser extent, translators and interpreters in Taiwan, a mixed part-time/freelance/in-house population where translation is dominant. Against the probable make-up of the total population engaged in translating or interpreting, the sample is also skewed towards younger and trained personnel (85% of the target group being alumni of

new postgraduate T&I programs) working between Chinese and English. Missing populations are likely to be older, non-formally-trained and/or working with other languages, who are harder to locate, as shown in the Taiwan STII survey. Many of these, on both sides of the straits, are also likely to be either part-timers or in-house staff with no outside activity (Chinese-English text translators with significant freelance activity would be captured through (written) translator recruiting lists, which we had for Taiwan but not for the mainland.) Two-thirds of the sample engages in both translation and interpreting, but about half are almost completely specialized in one or the other, justifying a fairly clear division into three groups: mainland interpreters, Taiwan translators, and mixed part-timers.

With these characteristics of the sample taken as given, the focus of analysis must therefore be on these groups' perceptions of their professional identity or status, the norms they apply in certain situations, and their attitudes to their occupation. Analysis by specialization or involvement (i.e., 'translators' vs. 'interpreters' vs. 'part-timers') shows some differences of perception. Qualitative data in the form of voluntary comments can be cautiously treated as indicative of trends and moods, especially in regard to questions where such data are abundant.

Job satisfaction is high, especially among the (better-paid) interpreters. Translators have more to say about status and money but are mostly satisfied, although some (10–15%) hope for eventual diversification or academic activity. The alleged 'springboard' attitude to T&I (as a stepping stone to a better or more lucrative career) seems negligible in these populations. Interpreters are more content with their status, which both groups agree is higher. Most respondents believe that translators are currently seen as equivalent to teachers (especially among translators and translator-interpreters in Taiwan), and interpreters also as journalists, lawyers or management consultants. Just over a third (37%) accept their current social status, and the dissatisfied do not specify a required status 'level.'

In terms of professional identity and commitment, most respondents choose the generic term *fanyi* to describe their main occupation, with slightly more specification among interpreters (as *kouyi*). Membership of professional associations is not popular, except perhaps among some full-time conference interpreters; in Taiwan, not a single respondent with translation as a main activity and source of income is a member of a local or national association.

No clear consensus emerges on whether training or certification may benefit the profession. Over half are for more or better training and some kind of testing or certification, and there is a clear interest in government intervention, either by official recognition or compulsory licensure, though the latter is advocated twice as often by translators (in Taiwan) (1/2) as by interpreters (in Shanghai) (1/3). Part-timers are more skeptical about academic training.



Interest in or allegiance to the profession as such is hard to gauge. Personal connections may be stronger than any general *esprit de corps* or recognition of a collective mission, particularly as evidenced by the lukewarm interest in professional organizations among text translators, on the one hand (the picture is less clear for interpreters), and the difference in response rate between respondents known or unknown to the researchers, on the other.

In regard to imposed norms or client directives, half deny having any knowledge of or being affected by them, while the other half give numerous examples of such interference, with which they usually comply, although a few express reluctance or resignation. In comments several state their own norms with regard to neutrality or loyalty. Not much serious interference was reported.

Two-thirds of respondents acknowledge that they may spontaneously tone down what they translate, although this occurs more often in interpreting and for “rude or aggressive language” rather than for other forms of criticism. A notable minority may also tone down criticism of their country or group, or recognize primary allegiance to a party other than the speaker or author (or sometimes, the user) — to the paying client, for example. However, these are primarily in-house employees. Freelancers almost uniformly declare loyalty to the speaker/author, then usually to the user/audience, though translators in particular offer thoughtful, nuanced commentary on this issue. In terms of role and contribution to society, and attitudes to the acquired language and culture, responses are down-to-earth and business-like, generally downplaying the ‘cultural mediator’ role.

There has been some recent discussion over whether professionalization in China will follow the European model or take a different path (see Gile 2006), shaped by different traditional norms or local conditions. In the absence of other studies asking such direct and ‘intimate’ questions in the East or the West, it seems hard at this stage to venture comparisons, and even to distinguish (in both East and West) the reality of practice from the ideal as formulated, for example, in the codes and principles of an association like AIIC. This is especially so given that these norms, especially in interpreting, are rooted largely in the international organization sector — which is less present in China — and may not fully penetrate the private market (again, in both East and West), notably in domains such as marketing, fashion and lifestyle, where these respondents sometimes report less ‘classical’ behaviors or attitudes in terms of client directives, or the in-house sector, where norms of loyalty deviate slightly from the classical model.

If we nevertheless attempt a tentative assessment against this (projected) backdrop of ‘Western’ T&I norms, the following impressions stand out. First, written translators seem to express the same range of thoughts and questions about the complexities of text-to-text translation as elsewhere, with little or no evidence of exceptional cultural specificity. Second, the activities of written translation and

interpreting are perhaps less clearly separated than in Europe, with most respondents doing some of both. However, a distinct interpreting profession does seem to be emerging. As in the West, interpreters seem to enjoy higher status than translators, and professionals in both T&I seem satisfied overall, while recognizing the somewhat ambivalent, uneven role and status that society assigns to them. Third, academic connections or aspirations seem to be stronger than in the West; at least there is a healthy respect for training in this sample, especially among interpreters, and an interest in exams and certification, with perhaps a greater acceptance of official involvement. Aspirations to formal recognition, and even controlled access to the professions, seem to be as strong or stronger than in Europe. The case of Taiwan also shows the difficulty for a relatively small or marginalized economy to support more than a handful of autonomous freelance professionals. One clear specificity, however, is the asymmetric cultural and linguistic background of translators and interpreters in the Chinese-English combination. Though currently inevitable for well-known historical reasons, this situation may not be optimal from the point of view of the quality and transparency of communication between cultures.

Finally, pragmatic, business-like attitudes to T&I practice may show a more realistic attitude to the translator's role as a neutral and basically powerless intermediary. Note, however, that no respondent reported agreeing to distort or omit significant content. As for 'toning-down' behavior, comparisons will have to await equivalent studies in the West. An interesting start has already been made in examining issues such as the assumption of neutrality in conference interpreting (Diriker 2004), interpreters' norms in political discourse (Gelke 2009), the relationship between interpreting and dominant ideologies (Beaton 2007), as well as the dimension of politeness and face and interpreters' 'self-preservation' strategies (Monacelli 2005, 2009). It is hoped that future studies will yield richer and comparable data for different regions, professional communities and market segments, to improve our understanding of differences, universals and specificities in the practice of T&I.

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## Notes

1. GITIS at Fugen Catholic University
2. For example, GITI at National Taiwan Normal University, from 1996.
3. GIIT in Shanghai, training conference interpreters since 2003, and GITIS in Taipei, training translators and interpreters since 1989.
4. AIIC: International Association of Conference Interpreters
5. Freelance translators cannot be estimated from sector returns, which only report the total number of contracts or times worked.
6. GITIS-FJU Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation Studies at Fu Jen Catholic University, Hsinchuang, Taipei.
7. GIIT- SISU: Graduate Institute of Interpretation and Translation, at Shanghai International Studies University ('Shangwai').
8. AIIC: International Association of Conference Interpreters; SIA: Shanghai Interpreters' Association; STA: Shanghai Translators' Association; IOL [UK]: Institute of Linguists (UK); TATI: Taiwan Association of Translation and Interpretation; TAC: Translators' Association of China.
9. Two German, one Japanese, one French, one Taiwanese.

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# Conference interpreters and their self-representation

## A worldwide web-based survey

Cornelia Zwischenberger

In this paper an analysis of the way conference interpreters describe their role and how they perceive their importance for successful communication in simultaneously interpreted conferences will be undertaken. These findings are an excerpt from a recent worldwide web-based survey among members of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC). The focus will be on a comparison between already existing metatexts on the conference interpreter's role and the newly collected ones from this web-survey. The paper will also briefly outline the methodological potential and limitations of web-based surveys which have been employed since the mid-1990s and have gradually found their way into translation studies.

**Keywords:** conference interpreting, self-representations, web-based surveying, AIIC

## Introduction

In previous decades, research in the field of conference interpreting was primarily guided by the cognitive sciences and aimed at explaining the mental processes involved in interpreting and simultaneous interpreting in particular. Only in recent years has the field begun to open up with the study of the social dimensions of conference interpreting as well (see Angelelli 2004; Diriker 2004.)

As with all professions, the identity, image and status of simultaneous conference interpreters are shaped by the way the profession, or the professional, is presented in the relevant oral and written discourse, produced by outsiders as well as insiders (see Diriker 2003). In this study I will offer an overview of role representations or "meta-discourses" on conference interpreters (Diriker 2004: 25ff.), as produced by insiders to the profession, namely conference interpreters, themselves.

My focus here will be on the way conference interpreters have been described and defined by the most powerful and influential association of conference interpreters worldwide, AIIC. With its regulations, code of professional ethics and professional standards, AIIC lays down what constitutes good professional practice and presumably shapes the professional identity and image of conference interpreters. Against this background, I will examine the extent to which conference interpreters' self-representations of their role and function, as collected in a worldwide web-based survey among AIIC members in late 2008, reflect the role descriptions and definitions propagated by their association.

A secondary focus of this article is the methodology underlying the larger survey project on quality and role, which was carried out with the help of a web-based questionnaire generator tool. Within the field of interpreting studies there has been very little experience with web-based surveys until now, so the present contribution will seek to demonstrate the potential of this approach to support large-scale studies of professional and other issues in our field.

## Early self-representations

Early contributions to the literature on conference interpreting written by practitioners in the 1950s and 1960s often revolve around self-representations in the form of definitions of a conference interpreter and his/her tasks, anecdotes from practice and attempts to explain the interpreting process. One of the first and best known contributions by an early practitioner is *The Interpreter's Handbook* by Jean Herbert (1952). The preface to the book, written by Stelling-Michaud (1952), contains a definition of the function of an interpreter: "By eliminating the language barrier that separates them, the interpreter directly ushers men into the thoughts of others, and thus *performs the function of an intermediary*, enabling their minds to achieve intellectual communion" (Stelling-Michaud 1952:VII, my emphasis). Stelling-Michaud (1952) depicts the interpreter as the person in between who facilitates intellectual exchange.

Herbert (1952: 3) himself also provides a (rather general) definition of the role of a conference interpreter. According to him, the conference interpreter fulfills the mission of an "assistant" or "helper" whose primary concern is that communities develop a deeper understanding and greater respect for one another, with the possibility of reaching an agreement if they wish so. In other passages of his *Handbook* he becomes more explicit about the interpreter's task(s): "The interpreter should never forget that the immediate and essential object of his work is to enable his audience to know accurately what the speaker intended to convey, and

to make on the audience the impression which the speaker wishes to be made” (Herbert 1952:23). Herbert stresses the importance of accuracy and absolute loyalty toward the speaker and his/her ideas and style.

Edmond Cary (1956) goes one step further and states that the interpreter must be an actor in order to identify completely with the speaker: “[...] [l’interprète] doit aussi être acteur. Qui donc, sinon un acteur, est capable de s’identifier totalement avec l’homme qui vient de parler et dont il doit transmettre fidèlement le propos? Quand une discussion véhémement oppose deux contradicteurs, l’interprète doit savoir avec une fougue égale se faire tour à tour le porte-parole de l’un comme de l’autre et se mettre instantanément dans la peau de chacun des adversaires (Cary 1956:147). In this meta-discourse on the conference interpreter, Cary uses the metaphor of “porte-parole,” and thereby unlike Herbert (1952:62) stresses the need for fidelity to the word and not to the idea expressed by the speaker. In a similar vein, Danica Seleskovitch compares the interpreter to an actor who serves as an intermediary between his/her audience and the original: “L’interprète est un *intermédiaire* comme le comédien qui ajoute son jeu au texte de l’auteur” (Seleskovitch 1968:181, my emphasis).

For Henri van Hoof (1962:32), the mission fulfilled by the interpreter is that of someone who builds bridges between individuals, groups and nations and facilitates interpersonal understanding: “Cette mission [...] est une mission de rapprochement entre individus, entre groupes, entre nations. L’interprète est un *jeteur de ponts*, le *pontifex* comme on l’a nommé, le servant d’un humanisme pratique [...]” (van Hoof 1962:55, my emphasis).

In summary, the early meta-discourses on the conference interpreter’s role produced by individual practitioners reflect a preference for metaphorical descriptions, such as that of the interpreter as an aid in communication, an intermediary, a bridge or an actor.

### Collective self-representation by a professional body (AIIC)

Metatexts on conference interpreting have also been produced by professional organizations of interpreters, most notably AIIC. As pointed out by Ebru Diriker (2009), those meta-discursive representations are not value-free descriptions of conference interpreting but rather represent a set of norms and thus performance instructions that specify what is right or wrong, permitted or forbidden according to the beliefs of a certain community. The metatexts produced by AIIC exert a particular influence on the professional identity of conference interpreters as the association enjoys high status and a positive reputation.



In a metatext addressing potential future members of the association, the conference interpreter's task is described as communicating to an audience "what the speaker means in the context of a particular meeting [...] whilst taking into account language and cultural differences" (AIIC 2005). In this process, the interpreter's presence should ideally go unnoticed: "Professional interpreters accomplish their exacting task with discretion. Ideally, delegates should communicate so effectively that they don't notice the language barrier" (AIIC 2005).

In a working definition of a conference interpreter dating back to the early 1980s, the cultural aspect mentioned in the above description does not play any role at all: "A Conference Interpreter is a person who by profession acts as a *responsible linguistic intermediary* [...] in a formal or informal conference or conference-like situation [...]" (AIIC 1984, my emphasis). Here the metaphorical concept of "linguistic intermediary" is used to characterize the interpreter's role.

In a version issued ten years later, the linguistic angle is still part of the definition but the aspect of communication is added: "A Conference Interpreter is a *qualified specialist in bi-lingual or multi-lingual communication*. He/she *makes this communication possible* between delegates of different linguistic communities [...] by comprehending the concepts of the speakers' message and conveying them orally in another language, either in consecutive, simultaneous or whispering" (AIIC 1994, my emphasis). Here we see a shift from the metaphor of the intermediary to the concept of the specialist who makes communication possible. This focus is retained in yet another working definition produced a decade later: "A conference interpreter is a *professional language and communication expert* who, at multilingual meetings, conveys the meaning of a speaker's message orally and in another language to listeners who would not otherwise understand" (AIIC 2004a, my emphasis). In this line of thought conference interpreting is also described as a "professional communication service" (AIIC 2004b). In their function as service providers, conference interpreters need to act as the speaker's alter ego: "Professional conference interpreters speak in the first person on behalf of the speaker, and, as such, their *primary loyalty is always owed to the speaker* and to the communicative intent that the speaker wishes to realize, whatever the speaker's position or point of view" (AIIC 2004b, my emphasis). The role representations produced by AIIC can also be found in documents issued by major users of conference interpreters such as the European Union, United Nations or the US Federal Government, which suggests a high degree of consensus between the perspectives of those providing the service and their institutional users. In the collective self-representations produced by AIIC, a shift from the linguistic intermediary to a focus on professionalism appears to have occurred.

The extent to which the self-representations propagated by influential members of the profession and by its professional organizations form an integral part of the professional identity of individual practitioners, and presumably also by trainers, was investigated as part of a larger survey conducted in late 2008. Selected findings from that survey and the survey method used, will be described below.

## Methods

The Survey on Quality and Role, which is part of a larger research project on “Quality in Simultaneous Interpreting” at the Center for Translation Studies of the University of Vienna,<sup>1</sup> was carried out as a web-based survey with a questionnaire generator tool. This approach is relatively new within the field of interpreting studies but clearly holds great potential. A pioneering example, which also served as the chief inspiration for the present study, is the survey on quality criteria by Delia Chiaro and Giuseppe Nocella (2004).

### *Web-based surveying*

The advantages of a web-based questionnaire in comparison to conventional paper-and-pencil questionnaires are quite obvious. Web-based questionnaires, which have been employed since the mid-1990s, permit the researcher to reach a large number of potential survey participants within short periods of time; it is much more cost-efficient, and it allows an automatic capture of responses in a database from which they can easily be exported to programs for statistical data analysis. These advantages, however, can be fully exploited only if careful consideration is given to issues of sampling and survey design as discussed by Pöschhacker (in this issue).

A crucial step is defining the target population, individual members of which can then be contacted and recruited in an active and direct manner. This forms the basis of all probability-based methods<sup>2</sup> in web-based surveying, in which all members of the target population have the same known nonzero probability of selection and of forming part of the sample. On this basis, inference and generalization to that population is possible (see Hauptmanns/Lander 2003: 29ff.).

It is only with direct and active recruitment, where the total number of contacted individuals is known to the researcher, that a response rate in percentages can be calculated. One of the problems in online research in general is the lack of a valid and exhaustive directory of internet users comparable to the telephone directories traditionally used for offline surveys. There are, however, subgroups

of internet users, such as university students, company employees or members of (professional) associations, for which directories or lists of e-mail addresses usually exist which can be used as a sampling frame. Survey invitations are then sent to the members of the target group by e-mail, and survey access is controlled in order to prevent multiple completions or forwarding of the questionnaire link to others. Even though internet access is by no means ubiquitous, these restricted populations generally reveal no coverage problems, or very high rates of coverage (see Couper 2000: 485f.; Couer/Coutts 2004: 233f.).

Such a list-based approach, targeting the full population rather than a sample, was also used in our web-based survey among conference interpreters.

### *AIIC survey design and questionnaire*

The Survey on Quality and Role was conducted as a full population survey among AIIC members in the fall of 2008. A total of 2523 email invitations containing the survey link were sent out, of which 49 emails could not be successfully delivered. The list of email addresses was compiled from the printed version of the AIIC 2008 Directory. The survey fielding time was exactly seven weeks (09/22/08–11/10/08), including two reminders. The web survey yielded a response rate of 28.5% (704 filled-in questionnaires).

The survey was carried out with the help of the web-based LimeSurvey questionnaire generator tool, which is available as freeware. The software was installed on one of the servers of the University of Vienna Center for Translation Studies, so that the survey could be hosted in-house rather than on an external server. For every single email address in the database, the system automatically generated a unique access token which was embedded in the URL (link to the web questionnaire). Thus, every member of the target group received a personalized link to the questionnaire, ruling out multiple completions and the possibility of passing it on to others. LimeSurvey creates two separate databases—one containing all the email addresses and the other containing all the responses. What is crucial is that the two databases are not linked. While the system allows the survey administrator to see who has submitted a response, the response as such cannot be related to the respondent. Participants were informed of this safeguard of their anonymity before clicking on the “submit” button on the last page of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of a total of 41 items, including some filter questions, and was divided into three main parts. Part A elicited sociodemographic background variables, such as age, gender, working experience, and language combination, while Part B was essentially a replication of Bühler (1986) on quality criteria. Part B also included a web-based experiment for which respondents were

asked to listen to a one-minute audio sample of a simultaneous interpretation and give their impression. Part C, the longest part, was dedicated to the conference interpreter's role. The introductory question was: "How would you describe your role as a conference interpreter in a word or two, or in a phrase?", followed by the question: "How important do you think your work usually is for successful communication?" The responses to these two questions will be presented in the remainder of this paper.

## Results

### *Sample*

Of the 704 conference interpreters who filled in and submitted the web-questionnaire, 76 percent were female, and 24 percent were male. Eighty-nine percent work as freelance interpreters, whereas only 11 percent are staff interpreters. With these ratios, the sample closely matches the membership structure of AIIC (see Neff 2008).

The average AIIC member in the sample is 52 years old, with a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 87 years of age. The largest group of respondents is between 50 and 59 years of age. In terms of formal education received, 79 percent of respondents indicated having a university-level degree in interpreting/translation and 60 percent also hold a university-level degree in another field.

Participants' average working experience as conference interpreters is 24 years, with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 57 years. Most of the responses fell in the category of 20 to 29 years of working experience. As far as the working languages were concerned, the most frequently reported A language was French (24%), closely followed by English (22%) and German (18%). Quite unsurprisingly, English (55%) is in the clear lead among B languages, followed by French (27%) and German (9%). The pattern is rather similar for C languages with English (47%) in the lead again, followed by French (43%) and then Spanish (29%).

Participants were also asked to indicate the sector in which they primarily worked. The majority (42%) are primarily engaged in the non-agreement sector<sup>3</sup> (private market). 33% work for the agreement sector<sup>3</sup> (UN family, EU institutions, etc.), and the rest (25%) are evenly distributed between the two. In terms of working mode, the vast majority of informants work primarily in the simultaneous mode: 79% of respondents indicated that they "rarely" or "never" work in the consecutive mode.

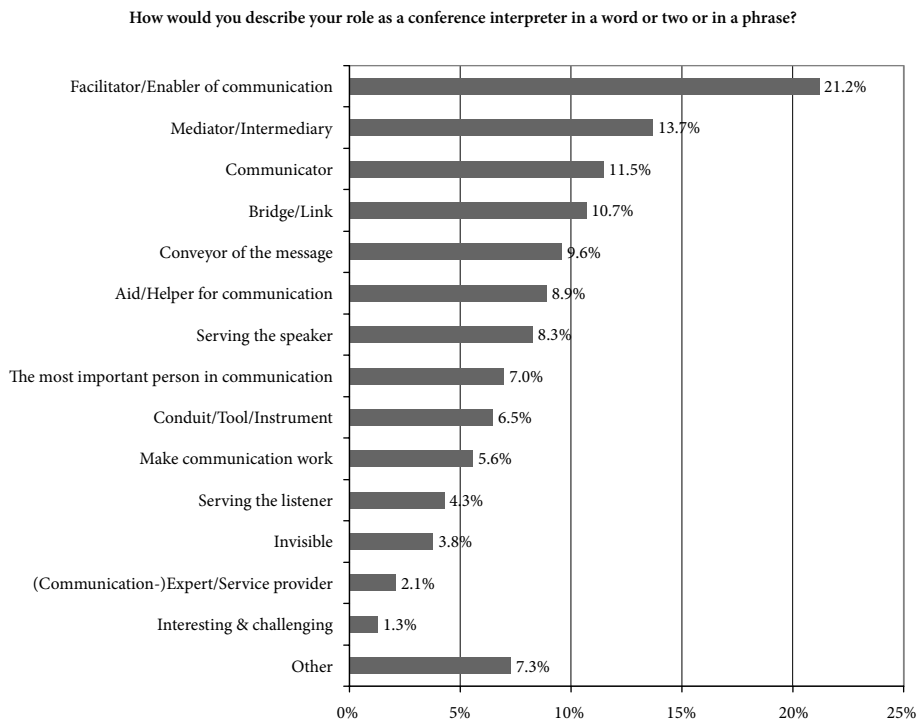


Figure 1. Self-representations (n = 828)

40.5% of respondents have been members of AIIC for up to nine years. The average is 15 years, with a minimum of one year and a maximum of 55 years of membership.

### *Conference interpreters and their self-representations*

With the aim of collecting conference interpreters' spontaneous individual self-representations of their role, we posed the open-ended question "How would you describe your role as a conference interpreter in a word or two or in a phrase?" This question is similar to the one asked by Feldweg (1996) in his interview-based study among German AIIC members in the 1980s (see Pöchhacker, in this issue). In our survey, it was answered by a total of 628 (89.2%) participants. Based on a thorough and protracted immersion in the verbal data, a total of fourteen main categories emerged (Figure 1).

The data were treated as multiple responses since some of the participants indicated more than one role description, as in "communicator and cultural mediator" (Respondent 589) or "communication medium–indispensable evil–facilitator"

(R 432). The quantitative results summarized in Figure 1 will now be complemented by examples of the responses, illustrating the categorization of role descriptions based on my understanding of the verbal data.

The most frequent self-representation was that of *facilitator/enabler of communication*, which was spontaneously expressed by more than one in five respondents. Examples include: “The interpreter is a facilitator, an enabler of communication” (R 419) or simply “An enabling role” (R 338). The second most frequent description—the interpreter as a *mediator/intermediary* (13.7%)—can be exemplified by responses such as “Mediator between two sides, two cultures” (R 422) or “Intermediary of languages and cultures” (R 520).

The third-ranking label is *communicator*, with 11.5% of survey participants describing themselves spontaneously as “interlingual/-cultural communicator” (R 1) or “accurate communicator” (R 401), followed by the metaphor of *bridge/link* (10.7%): “Link between different languages and different cultures” (R 114) or “a bridge between cultures” (R 379). Another role description, used by almost 10% of respondents, is that of *conveyor of the message*. Here the act of passing the message from one side to the other is the focal point: e.g., “conveyor of intended meaning” (R 21); “getting the message across” (R 206). This category is closely followed by the notion of *aid/helper for communication*: “a modest but indispensable helper” (R 405) or “helping people to understand each other (what else?)” (R 101). Under the heading of *serving the speaker (original)*, the interpreter’s loyalty towards the speaker and her/his utterance is expressed in phrases such as “Speaker’s alter ego” (R 561), “Becoming the speaker’s voice” (R 328) or “being as true to the original as possible” (R 50). In yet another description in Figure 1, the conference interpreter is referred to as *the most important person in communication*: “Key role for understanding” (R 119); “The interpreter is always the most important person in communication” (R 460). This very self-confident self-representation is followed by an extremely technical and impersonal one—the interpreter as a *conduit/tool/instrument*: “A tool to allow communication to flow” (R 486); “communication vehicle” (R 92) or “Like software converting Word to PDF” (R 166). Here conference interpreters likened their function to that of a technical device. For the definition of the conference interpreter as the one who *makes communication work*, examples of responses include “make communication work” (R 14), “Ensuring good communication” (R 473) or “I make the parties understand clearly what each other means, and assure them they are in good hands.” (R 15). An alternative view was expressed by respondents who defined their task based on loyalty towards their listeners: “The interpreter should enable his/her clients to feel as comfortable and involved as those listening in their native language.” (R 468) or “Always interested in subject matter and very focussed on my listeners” (R 73). This user-oriented role

perception is followed by the description of the conference interpreter as an *invisible* agent: “Not be noticed” (R127); “Invisible, anonymous, but nevertheless efficient” (R607).

The last two role categories, which were mentioned spontaneously by the fewest respondents, are the interpreter as (*Communication-)*Expert/Service provider (2.1%): “a specialist in communication” (R411); “offering a professional service in communication” (R390), and the adjectival description of role as *interesting and challenging* (1.3%): “Interesting, challenging” (R597) or “ongoing challenge–continual learning experience” (R447).

The residual category *Other* includes role descriptions which could not be fitted into any of the main categories. They include such creative characterizations as “Walking a few miles in somebody else’s shoes. Actor” (R492), “Writing and acting your own lines” (R575), and “A football player who helps another one to score.” (R443).

As with any categorization of qualitative data, the labels used for the varied responses are a matter of interpretation. Some of the self-representations, such as *facilitator/enabler of communication* and *aid/helper* or *mediator/intermediary* and *bridge/link*, might look quite similar at first sight. Based on a thorough and extended analysis of the data, however, relevant distinctions can be identified, and it was my goal to extract as differentiated a picture as possible.

### *Importance for successful communication*

The second item in Part C of the questionnaire asked respondents to rate the question “How important do you think your work usually is for successful communication?” on a four-point itemized-category scale ranging from “very important” to “unimportant.” The overwhelming majority of respondents (97.2%) rated their contribution to successful communication as either “very important” (47.1%) or “important” (50.1%). Only 2.8% of survey participants ticked “less important” when rating the importance of their work, while not a single conference interpreter ticked “unimportant.” This highly favorable opinion is in line with the findings of Janet Altman (1990) for Brussels-based interpreters and AIIC members in the British Isles region.

To explore the influence of conference interpreters’ socio-professional background on their rating of the importance of their work, the latter was crosstabulated with the information on background variables elicited in Part A of the questionnaire. In preparation for a chi-square test, three same-size categories were formed out of the numerical data on age, working experience and AIIC membership (Table 1).

Table 1. Importance of work in relation to background variables

		<i>very important</i>	<i>important</i>	<i>less important</i>	<i>total</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	48.1%	49.2%	2.7%	522	690 (100%)
	Male	44%	53%	3%	168	
<b>Employment status</b>	Freelance	47.6%	49.7%	2.8%	614	690 (100%)
	Staff member	43.4%	53.9%	2.6%	76	
<b>Age</b>	30–47 Years	45.3%	52.6%	2.2%	232	674 (100%)
	48–57 Years	45.6%	51.3%	3.1%	228	
	58+ Years	49.5%	47.2%	3.3%	214	
<b>University- level degree in I/T</b>	Yes	46%	51%	3%	526	667 (100%)
	No	51.8%	46.8%	1.4%	141	
<b>A languages (mother tongue)</b>	FR	46.8%	50%	3.2%	124	327 (100%)
	EN	44.2%	53.7%	2.1%	95	
	DE	38.9%	58.3%	2.8%	108	
<b>Working experience</b>	4–19 Years	47.4%	51.4%	1.2%	247	690 (100%)
	20–29 Years	48.1%	48.1%	3.7%	216	
	30+ Years	45.8%	50.7%	3.5%	227	
<b>Market</b>	Private market	50.7%	47.3%	2.0%	294	690 (100%)
	Institutional market	44.3%	52.2%	3.5%	230	
	Both markets	44.6%	52.4%	3.0%	166	
<b>AIIC member</b>	→8 Years	52.1%	46%	1.9%	261	674 (100%)
	9–19 Years	49.5%	48.4%	2.1%	192	
	20+ Years	39.8%	55.7%	4.5%	221	
<b>Consecutive mode</b>	(very) often	55.2%	44.8%	0%	143	686 (100%)
	rarely-never	44.9%	51.6%	3.5%	543	

The figures in Table 1 show relatively small differences for the various sub-groups in their perception of importance. Female respondents rated their work as slightly more important than did men. The same applies to freelancers, whose perception of importance is slightly higher than that of staff interpreters. The three age groups also show an almost identical perception of importance, with only a slight rise in the group aged 58 and older. AIIC members with a university-level degree in interpreting/translation rated their contribution to successful communication as slightly less important than did informants without a degree.



A breakdown of the ratings by A languages was made for the three most frequent ones, i.e., English, French and German. Conference interpreters with French as their mother tongue show the highest percentage for “very important” (46.8%), closely followed by English-A interpreters (44.2%), whereas only 38.9% of German-A interpreters ticked that category.

For the crosstabulation with working experience, respondents were again divided into three groups, all of which show an almost identical perception of importance. AIIC respondents who primarily work for the private market (non-agreement sector) rated their work as slightly more important than their colleagues who mainly interpret for the institutional market (agreement sector) or both markets to almost the same extent.

Only the last two variables show more marked differences in the rating of importance among the subgroups, and a chi-square test showed these differences to be statistically significant. The perception of importance is found to decline with the duration of AIIC membership. While a rating of “very important” was given by 52.1% of respondents in the bracket of up to eight years of membership and by 49.5% of those in the category of nine to 19 years, only 39.8% of respondents with 20 or more years of affiliation with AIIC opted for the highest category on the four-part scale. This was found to correlate significantly ( $\chi^2$  ( $n = 674$ ,  $df = 4$ ) = 9.842;  $p = 0.043 < 0.05$ ).

The frequency with which conference interpreters work in the consecutive mode was found to correlate with their rating of importance at an even higher level of significance ( $\chi^2$  ( $n = 686$ ,  $df = 2$ ) = 8.606;  $p = 0.014 < 0.05$ ). 55.2% of those who often interpret consecutively rated their work as “very important” compared to the 44.9% of respondents who only rarely or never work in the consecutive mode. This recalls the idea that the switch from consecutive to simultaneous interpreting has been accompanied with a diminished sense of presence on the part of the conference interpreter (see Pöchhacker, in this issue).

## Discussion

As has been shown, conference interpreters use quite a variety of metaphors and descriptions for their self-representations. To a large extent, the set of metatexts elicited in our web-based questionnaire reflect and reproduce the self-representations produced at various times by influential pioneers and by AIIC. It can therefore be assumed that the classical and institutional pronouncements on the conference interpreter’s role form an integral part of the socialization and thus professional identity of individual conference interpreters.

In this study conference interpreters saw themselves most frequently in an assisting or helping role, using descriptions such as facilitator/enabler or helper, which may be traced back to the earliest texts on the profession. The self-representation of the conference interpreter as the impartial person in the middle, expressed by such descriptions as intermediary/mediator or bridge/link, was also found to be very common, and these metaphors are also found in the early metatexts as well as in the collective self-representation by AIIC. The role-perception of conference interpreters as professionals rendering a communication service, which was a focal point in the metatexts produced by AIIC, was also expressed spontaneously in self-representations, such as communicator, (communication) expert and service provider who makes communication work. Some respondents also presented the primary aspect of their role as being loyal to the speaker and the original speech, which is also a principal demand in the association's metatexts. Others described their role as such as being of primary importance for communication and understanding. However, there are impersonal self-representations as well, and these tend to undermine the importance of the interpreter's agency. Examples of this include metaphors such as tool or instrument or the demand for the interpreter's invisibility. The latter self-representation is also propagated by AIIC, which states that, ideally, the interpreter's presence should not be noticed.

As reflected in this plurality of self-descriptions, the concept of the conference interpreter's role is a multidimensional construct. Our target population of AIIC conference interpreters is more homogeneous when it comes to the importance attached to the interpreter's work for successful communication. For most sub-groups of background variables, the ratings show an almost identical pattern. Only the length of membership and the amount of work done in the consecutive mode present a somewhat different picture, with senior AIIC members rating their work as less important and those working more often in consecutive interpreting perceiving their work as more important for successful communication.

## Conclusion

There is no single or uniform way in which the role of the conference interpreter is presented in existing metatexts by AIIC, the writings of influential pioneers and the newly collected meta-discourses in this study. However, the role-images elicited in our web-based survey show a high degree of convergence and seem to have a strong bearing on the professional identity of present-day conference interpreters.

Using an open-ended question to elicit AIIC members' self-representations of their role, we hoped to capture thoughtful, unconstrained and unbiased responses.

The categories extracted from this rich body of verbal data may now be used in further studies aimed at comparable populations or interpreters in other professional domains.

The AIIC Survey on Quality and Role, selected findings of which are presented in this article, highlights the potential of web-based surveying as an innovative tool to gather empirical data on attitudes and perceptions, provided researchers pay sufficient attention to the design issues inherent in this powerful methodological approach.

## Notes

1. The project (P20264-G03) is led by Franz Pöchhacker with support from the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).
2. In practice, however, non-probability approaches based on a non-active and non-direct recruitment of respondents are prevalent as they do not necessitate extensive planning. Respondents enter the sample via self-selection. Typical examples of such non-probability approaches are so-called banner surveys or open invitations on portals or frequently visited web sites. Such surveys generally have no access restrictions or control over multiple completions. Claims for scientific validity of such self-selected approaches are highly problematic.
3. AIIC negotiates collective agreements on remuneration and working conditions with the United Nations, the European Union and other major employers worldwide (termed *agreement sector* in AIIC jargon). The *non-agreement sector* refers to the private market.

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# Habitus and self-image of native literary author-translators in diglossic societies

Reine Meylaerts

Since in many cases past and present the professional translation field is not — or is only weakly — differentiated, the transposability of dispositions acquired through experiences related both to other fields and to translators' larger life conditions and social trajectory may play a fundamental role in a translator's habitus. Research on translators' socio-biographies therefore deserves special attention. For native literary author-translators who live and work in a diglossic society characterized by socio-linguistic conflicts between the translators' working languages, the plural and dynamic internalization of this conflict and of broader linguistic and cultural hierarchies is likely to form one of the constitutive aspects of their habitus and self-image, of their literary and translational behavior. In the first part of this article, I propose a tentative typology of Belgian native author-translators' habitus and self-image according to potentially different internalizations of the Belgian linguistic conflict in their broader socialization process. In the second part, I present relevant aspects of the socio-biography of Camille Melloy, a native literary author-translator who translated between conflicting cultures in early twentieth century Belgium.

**Keywords:** habitus, native translator, bilingualism, diglossia, Belgium, socio-biography

## Introduction

Over the last few years, research on translators' habitus has attempted to enhance understanding of translation as a social activity from an agency-based concept within a broader sociology of translation.<sup>1</sup> Bourdieu (1972) defines habitus as the system of durable and transposable dispositions through which an individual thinks and acts according to his/her life conditions and social trajectory. Habitus refers to the subjects' internalized system of social structures in the form of dispositions. The inculcation of social structures is a life-long process of interactions

between structure and agency through various and variable individual and collective experiences. Dispositions engender practices, perceptions and attitudes that are regular but not necessarily fixed or invariant. Under the influence of social position and one's individual and collective past, every cultural actor thus develops (and continues to develop) a social identity, that is, a certain representation of the world and of the person's position therein.

Although provocative, *habitus* was for a long time a rather vague concept for which fine-grained analyses — not only in the field of Translation Studies — were largely missing (see Simeoni 1998). As a consequence, the concept's implementation regularly received a deterministic flavor, which seemed to confirm the precedence of structure over agency. Within Translation Studies, this kind of reductionist determinism is apparent in the overemphasis placed on translators' submissiveness as a universal component of translators' *habitus*.

As recent studies stress (Lahire 2001, 2003, 2004, Sela-Sheffy 2005), only a dynamic and plural concept of *habitus* can contribute to an understanding of the actual products of translation and of the regularities and discontinuities of a translator's individual itinerary within a specific socio-cultural and geo-political context. Any translator's *habitus* may be the object of confrontations with various field logics and thus of multiple definitions and discontinuities.

Among other things, Translation Studies has benefited from using *habitus* as a conceptual tool to comprehend the translator/interpreter as a professional (Simeoni 1998, Sela-Sheffy 2005, Inghilleri 2003, 2005a, Gambier 2006). However, as correctly pointed out by Simeoni 1998 and Sela-Sheffy 2005, *habitus* not only refers to professional expertise but also stands for a whole socialized individual. In addition to a field *habitus* or professional *habitus*, it is necessary to take into account what is referred to as the initial or generalized *habitus*, which is a dynamic and plural set of mental and physical repertoires for social behavior in life at large.<sup>2</sup> The initial *habitus* refers to the individual's mental and physical structures as shaped by early socialization within structures of family, class, and education. It is of primary importance for developing a sense of what is perceived as appropriate behavior in a certain context. Accordingly, since Simeoni 1998, many Translation Studies scholars have focused on the social and biological trajectories of translators and interpreters as a way to understand their translational behavior, perceptions and beliefs.<sup>3</sup> For example, following Bourdieu's insistence on the crucial importance of the initial *habitus*, Inghilleri 2005b stresses the relevance of research into the individual socio-biographies of interpreters in relation to their roles in political asylum processes. In his studies of American literature translated in France in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Gouanvic 2005, 2007 pays due attention to the way in which the "very different social trajectories" of eminent translators like Coindreau, Duhamel or Vian "determined their literary tastes when they began

to translate” (2005: 159). Similarly, Hanna stresses how the “fact that early theatre translators in Egypt were mainly Lebanese Christians who had immigrated in the last decades of the 19th century sheds light on their trajectories in the field of theatre translation in Egypt” (2005: 189) and on their stylistic preference for a hybrid Arabic. In his study of the first complete Italian translation of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, by the eighteenth-century translator Domenico Valentini, Simeoni reconstructs the translator’s habitus from his life history as a “typical *miraculé* — Bourdieu’s catch-word for those who have managed to extract themselves from the[ir] social determinations” (2006: 197), and relates this trajectory to his “abnormative” translation preferences in his *Giulio Cesare* (1756).

Along similar lines, this article will focus on situations where the professional translation field is not (or is only weakly) differentiated. Accordingly, the transposability of dispositions acquired through early socialization, larger life conditions and social trajectory may play a fundamental role in a translator’s habitus. Among other cases, this transposition of dispositions is very plausible when authors combine their pen with literary translation activities without being trained as translators (see also Sela-Sheffy 2005). If in addition these literary author-translators happen to be native translators (Toury 1995: 241), it is likely their initial habitus will be (a fundamental) part of their translator habitus. The native’s competence is mainly the result, again, not of formal translator training but of an early socialization process: being born into a bilingual family or living in a diglossic society and being educated in a language other than the mother tongue, etc. This socialization process also includes all kinds of linguistic, social, religious, and political experiences and trajectories that may influence (but in variable and various ways) a native literary author-translator’s perceptions of, and affective attitudes toward, the respective languages, their speakers, their cultures, their status, etc. As a result, and in line with the studies quoted above, understanding translation as a social activity from an agency-based concept may benefit from in-depth research into the personalized professional, social and cultural history of translators.

In the remaining part of this article, I will focus on the specific case of native literary author-translators who live and work in a diglossic society characterized by socio-linguistic conflicts between the translators’ working languages.<sup>4</sup> Since the advent of modernity, language relations have been politicized: people are expected to identify with an institutionalized language (often the language of education, administration, the legal and political system, etc.), which in turn gives them certain rights. Many contemporary societies inspired by the nation-state paradigm<sup>5</sup> tend to grant privileged institutional status to one of the languages used by the population of a certain territory.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, in diglossic societies, linguistic conflicts often find their origin in the unequal institutionalization of languages in society. In other words, the monolingualism of their national, regional, or local



institutions contrasts with the linguistic diversity of people on the ground. As a consequence, the institutional and symbolic hierarchy between majority and minority languages and speakers<sup>7</sup> is very pervasive: the non- (or less) institutionalized minority languages are more or less excluded from the important political, legal, administrative, and educational domains. Of course, these hierarchies are not static but take shape within a dynamic continuum: a given minority language can be institutionalized in local but not in national administration; a given minority group can have the right to offer primary but not secondary or university education in 'its' language; a given group may publish literary works, newspapers or possess radio or TV channels in 'its' language, etc. As far as literature is concerned, the literary works written in the minority language tend to have a less legitimate, less prestigious status. In short, this type of widespread institutionalization implies very hierarchical and sometimes oppositional relationships between the different languages, literatures and their literary actors.

### **Literary translators in Belgium**

This was the case in nineteenth and early twentieth century Belgium, where French was the main language of administration and education, of the legal and political system, and of the army, while Dutch,<sup>8</sup> although spoken by a majority of the people, was the non- or less institutionalized minority language.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, literature in Dutch, at the time often called Flemish literature, had a minor status. As a consequence, the socialization process of people in the culture was marked by their interiorizing the superiority of the dominant language and literature and the inferiority of the minority language and literature. However, not all members of such a linguistic community internalize these hierarchies to the same extent: some of them will do so without questioning them, while others will oppose them in a more or less radical way. So, for example, while some Dutch speakers opted for a linguistic transfer, abandoning Dutch in favor of French, other Dutch-speaking groups opposed French dominance and claimed for Dutch an institutional and symbolic status equal to that of French. For them, Dutch needed to be accepted as the official language for administration, justice and education in Flanders, the northern part of the country. Obviously, most Francophones perceived these claims as a threat to their dominant socio-linguistic and socio-political position. From their position of power, they tried to counter them as long as possible. This ongoing conflict is known as the "language question" and has profoundly marked Belgium's socio-cultural, socio-political, and institutional evolutions, and even its existential crises (for a more elaborate overview, see Meylaerts 2007 and 2009).

In such a situation of linguistic conflict, the plural and dynamic internalization of this conflict and of broader linguistic and cultural hierarchies by the native literary author-translator translating between the conflicting cultures is likely to form one of the constitutive aspects of his/her habitus and self-image, of his/her literary and translational behavior. Additionally, experiences in various other fields (the social, political, artistic, educational, and religious) may of course contribute to his/her mental and behavioral schemata. In the following, I will propose a tentative typology of native author-translators' habitus and self-image according to potentially different internalizations of the Belgian linguistic conflict within the broader process of socialization. Given the fuzzy distinctions between the fields of literature and translation in the case of authors who combine original writing with literary translation activities without training as translators,<sup>10</sup> the typology will combine author-translator positions. Needless to say, this typology must be seen as a continuum of attitudes, perceptions and positions, and deserves to be tested in other situations.

At one end of the continuum are those bilinguals who have internalized the superiority of French to the point that they deem it unworthy to write in Dutch and so become monolingual French authors. For the same reason, some of them would abstain from translating Flemish literature into French. Others may perceive translation as a means of endowing prestige to those minority language literary works considered worthy of being translated into the majority language. However, because of their firm internalization of the linguistic and literary hierarchies, it is likely their translations will show evidence of habitus-governed socio-stylistics, such as using popular language registers for reported speech and accentuating the distance between narrator and characters. This was indeed one of the main strategies of literary translators of Flemish novels into French during the interwar period in Belgium (see Meylaerts 2004).

At the other end of the continuum are those bilinguals who struggle against their internalized perception of the superiority of French language and literature to the point that they write exclusively in Dutch as a statement in favor of its linguistic and literary emancipation. For the same reason, the most radical among them would abstain from any translation activity, considering it to be a forfeiture of the minority literature's search for identity and emancipation (for an example, see Meylaerts 2008). Others may be willing to engage in translation, translating Belgian French literature into Dutch rather than in the opposite direction. A famous example is Stijn Streuvels, the most important Flemish novelist of the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. A promoter of the Flemish emancipation struggle, he wrote exclusively in Dutch and translated some French Belgian colleagues into Dutch but never translated in the opposite direction. Next

to his rather imperfect bilingualism,<sup>11</sup> the fact that translating Flemish literature into French was perceived as treason by the Flemish emancipation groups may have played a role in this (see Meylaerts 2004).

In between these extreme positions are bilingual writers who publish both in Dutch and in French and do not object to translating in either direction. For this reason, however, they risk being criticized by both French- and Dutch-speaking groups.

Of course, this kind of typology is mainly helpful as a starting point to comprehend broad patterns of translator trajectories. Understanding an individual translator's habitus and self-image and his/her habitus-governed socio-stylistics, both in its collective and individual dimension, calls for more fine-grained analysis capable of revealing possible habitus clashes. As already pointed out, especially in the case of native author-translators, one might expect dispositions related to their literary position and to their larger life conditions and social trajectory. In the remaining portion of this article, I will therefore sketch some aspects of the socio-biography of Camille Melloy, a native literary author-translator who translated between the conflicting cultures in early twentieth-century Belgium. Let me stress that, given this specific focus and the time and space constraints within this article, a more developed analysis of the field(s) in which the translator and his work were situated cannot be elaborated here.<sup>12</sup>

### Camille Melloy, a Fleming translating into French

Camille Melloy was born Camillus Josephus De Paepe in 1891 in Melle, a rural village in Flanders. He saw himself as a genuine Fleming with ancient Flemish roots:

J'appartiens à une famille purement flamande, dont les origines flamandes peuvent être contrôlées dans le passé jusqu'au 13<sup>e</sup> siècle.<sup>13</sup>

[I belong to a purely Flemish family, whose Flemish origins can be traced in the past to the 13th century.]

His father being a cobbler, the family belonged to the lower middle class as artisans. In later private correspondence, the adult Melloy reflects his internalization of this class habitus: “*je ne suis qu'un humble campagnard, très timide, et nullement habitué au grand monde.*”<sup>14</sup> [I'm only a modest countryman, very shy and not at all habituated to the higher circles]. Accordingly, the child was raised not in French, the language of the dominant classes, but in the Dutch dialect of his region. Although compulsory school attendance until the age of 12 became law only in 1914, Camille did attend primary school. His school language would have been standard Dutch and not French, as was the case for the higher classes living in Flanders.<sup>15</sup> Thus, until the age of twelve he was a monolingual speaker of Belgian

Dutch. However, the family's desire for social mobility led his parents to send their youngest child to a francophone secondary school. This was a decisive move for Camille. In 1903 he pursued his studies at the Collège des Pères Joséphites, a Catholic francophone secondary school in a small town in Flanders. Indeed, most Catholic secondary schools of good reputation in Flanders were francophone at the time. Religious orders like the Josephites owned their own schools, which were subsidized by the state. Flanders' population being deeply Catholic, most Catholic families preferred to send their children to private Catholic schools over non-denominational state-run schools.<sup>16</sup> But of course, there was a severe socio-linguistic barrier: these schools were mostly attended by middle and upper class (and thus) francophone children. Dutch-speaking children from the lower or lower middle classes were admitted with the implicit expectation of their entering the given religious order. Obviously, for modest families like the Melloy's, the ordination of a son was an evident sign of social promotion. And this is exactly the trajectory followed by Camille. In 1906, during his secondary school studies, he also entered the novitiate and received the sacrament of holy orders in 1908.

In the French school, the child very quickly became bilingual, laying the foundation for a partial linguistic transfer later in his professional life. Moreover, school was undoubtedly one of the main factors for his interiorizing the superiority of French and of the French literary canon. Like so many youngsters, Melloy was strongly influenced by some of his teachers, in particular, Father Renaud Bouveraux de Fall, his francophone teacher of French literature, who imbued him with a deep appreciation of the French literary canon. This was in fact characteristic for francophone Belgian education as a whole. Indeed, the francophone Belgian literary field is heavily weighted towards the French, which is reflected in the fact that the cultural and literary models taught at francophone Belgian schools were (and still are!) not Belgian but French. For generation after generation, the average francophone Belgian thus internalized a strong feeling of inferiority vis-à-vis French literature and culture (for examples from Melloy's period, see Meylaerts 2004). For those who pursued a literary career, to be published and to be successful in Paris was seen as the highest achievement of symbolic capital (see below for Melloy's position in this respect). Many years later, Melloy's correspondence to a friend testified of his profound internalization of French literary norms:

Et moi, formé exclusivement par des livres français (je ne peux pas lire un livre belge)...<sup>17</sup>

[And I, exclusively formed by French books (I cannot read a Belgian book)...]

Next to this literary habitus, Melloy's secondary school years may also have been decisive for his broader socio-linguistic habitus. All classes being taught in French, French was the perceived language of knowledge, of science, and in Catholic

milieus the Church contributed to this perception. According to Cardinal Mercier, the Belgian cardinal from 1907–1926, Dutch was simply not suitable as a language of higher education. As a youngster of humble Flemish origin, Melloy may have felt uncomfortable among his fellow pupils who belonged mostly to the francophone or bilingual upper and middle classes. The Dutch-speaking children's position of inferiority was further accentuated by the interdiction against the speaking of Dutch at French school. Whoever broke this rule was punished.

However, it is plausible that Melloy's love for Flanders and for Flemish literature was also heightened during his secondary-school years by some of his teacher-priests of Flemish origin. Religious as well as cultural-linguistic factors may have played a role in this respect. At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, Flemish literature was appreciated in francophone Catholic milieus for its sound popular and regional views, which were in accordance with the ideal of Catholic culture (Vanderpelen 2004). Moreover, some of the Flemish priests teaching in the francophone schools encouraged more than purely literary love and admiration for Flanders; they also inspired in their pupils politically-colored feelings in favor of Flemish linguistic, cultural and political emancipation. The famous Flemish poet-priest Gezelle (1830–1899) was advanced as one of the standard-bearers of these emancipation claims. Although Melloy repeatedly called Gezelle his “*maître inconnu*” [unknown master] (Vanclooster 2001), he never stood on the barricades for the Flemish Movement and his appreciation of Catholic Flemish literature and its famous writers was free of any politics. In his later correspondence his attacks on “*l'inévitable idéologie de primaire des flamingants sur les déracinés*”<sup>18</sup> [the primitive ideology of the supporters of the Flemish Movement on the uprooted] testify to the same reticence and to his internalization of socio-linguistic hierarchies. However, as an adult he also carefully avoided any open association with anti-Flemish positions: “*le Bien Public (...) veut me faire servir aux fins de sa basse et périmée politique fransquillonne. Merci!*”<sup>19</sup> [the [newspaper] Bien Public wants to use me for their low and backward fransquillon politics. Thanks!], he wrote to a friend. ‘Fransquillon’ was a strong term of abuse used by Dutch-speaking Flemings for Gallicized Flemings like Melloy. Melloy clearly did not wish to be identified with the fransquillons, so as to avoid any negative perception of his linguistic transfer by supporters of the Flemish Movement. As a bilingual of Flemish origin, Melloy tried to take up an almost impossible middle position between the two languages and cultures involved in the linguistic struggles, a position which was likely to lead to *habitus* clash.

After his studies of Romance Philology at the then-francophone university of Leuven, Melloy, taking advantage of the clergy's increasing need for teachers (Vanderpelen 2004), became a secondary school teacher of French, Greek and Latin. Although he taught in a French-language school, he regularly gave attention to

Flemish authors in his classes. In his course on literary technique, he discussed examples from prominent regionalist Catholic Flemish writers like Gezelle, Timmermans and Streuvels. This was a rather unusual pedagogical choice at the time (Vanclooster 2001). In 1934 he wrote to a friend:

A mes leçons de français, de grec et de latin, j'ajouterais cette année le cours de néerlandais en rhétorique. Je me suis présenté pr [sic] le donner, n'ayant pas d'amateurs. Moi, je l'aimerais.<sup>20</sup>

[To my lessons of French, Greek and Latin, I'll join this year the course of Dutch in the fifth year. I volunteered to teach it since there were no takers. I myself will love it.]

The perceived disdain for Dutch by his colleagues, as evidenced by their reluctance to teach the course, might have made Melloy appear to be a promoter of the minority language and literature, an image that might not have been appreciated by everyone. A few weeks later he repeated: "Vous ai-je dit que j'enseigne cette année la littérature néerlandaise en rhétorique? Une coquetterie, ça me plaît."<sup>21</sup> [Did I tell you I am teaching this year Dutch literature in the fifth year? A coquetry; it pleases me.] Moreover, his teaching style was perceived as rather unconventional, like that of his "unknown master," Gezelle. In short, from his early youth on, Melloy's initial habitus and self-image were susceptible to a habitus clash between Flemish and francophone repertoires. It is very probable to find this clash highlighted in his writing and translating career.

Some three years after he began to teach, Melloy was called up as a stretcher-bearer at the front during the First World War. There he began to write poetry, first in Dutch, published in *De Belgische Standaard*, then in French for *Notre Belgique*. In spite of this bilingual start and in spite of the front's reputation as a hotbed of Flemish sympathies and emancipation claims, Melloy soon opted for French, a choice largely in line with his linguistic habitus. His debut verse *Le Beau Réveil* was published in 1922 in France (Tours), marking the launch of a successful career also in France. In light of his previous remarks on the perceived prestige of the French literary field, Melloy's success in France contributed to his status in Belgium. In 1923 his first collection of poems appeared, and from then on Melloy published a volume almost every year until his death in 1941. Several of these volumes were awarded prizes, also in France. For example, in 1934 *Enfants de la terre* was awarded the Edgar Poe Prize, a French prize for a francophone poet of non-French nationality. It received a great deal of attention in the Flemish press as well, where some critics openly regretted his linguistic transfer (see also below). Towards the end of his career, Melloy published children's literature in both French and Dutch. However, children's literature being a marginal genre, this had little effect on his self-representation and public image as a francophone author.

Obviously, given the contemporary language struggles, his preference for French was not perceived as neutral. Acclaimed by his francophone colleagues, he was accused of being a traitor to the Flemish language and literature by some Dutch-language groups. Interviewed for a Flemish newspaper on the occasion of the Edgar Poe Prize, Melloy tended to justify his early preference for French as something beyond his will, something that should be imputed to the Flemish themselves. According to him, the Flemish never encouraged him whereas he immediately received support from the francophone side. He concluded the interview with a rhetorical question, making the poet more of a linguistic victim than a linguistic activist: “Ten slotte, alles goed beschouwd, kiest de dichter wel zijn taal?” (H.B. 1934:4) [After all, all things considered, does the poet really choose his language?] He even left open the possibility of returning to Dutch, thus accentuating the instability of his linguistic disposition:

Het is niet onmogelijk dat ikzelf een dezer dagen mij aan het schrijven zet in het Vlaamsch... Onlangs heb ik een vlaamsch gedicht geschreven bij gelegenheid van de inwijding van een Calvarie hier in den tuin. (H.B. 1934:4)

[It is not impossible that I'll start writing in Flemish one of these days... The other day I wrote a Flemish poem on the occasion of the inauguration of a Way of the Cross here in the garden.]

However, except for some of his children's books, this never materialized.

In private discourse, his tone was slightly different. In several letters to francophone colleagues and friends, Melloy wrote that he saw himself as a “Flamand pur sang”<sup>22</sup> [a pure blooded Fleming] and that he felt more at ease in French because it was the language of his studies. At that time, there was no contradiction whatsoever for Francophones in qualifying as a Fleming someone who wrote in French. However, the promoters of the Flemish Movement tried to establish an exclusive link between the language and the people, preserving the denomination of ‘Flemish’ for Dutch-language authors. Their famous slogan “De taal is gansch het volk” [the language is the whole people] summarized this preoccupation. In Dutch-language letters to the Flemish authors he was translating into French, Melloy felt he had to anticipate possible objections through apologies and self-accusation:

Nu ge weer eens 'n zaakvollen brief hebt geschreven, voel ik een jeukte om er op te antwoorden. (Soit dit une fois pour toutes, ge vergeeft me mijn onechte wendingen hé?) Ik ben immers maar een verlopen Vlaming en hanteer maar flink de fransche taal.<sup>23</sup>

[Now that you've again written an expert letter, I feel an itch [sic] to answer it. (Soit dit une fois pour toutes, you forgive me my forced turns, don't you?) After all, I'm only a shabby Fleming and handle only vigorously the French language.]



This self-representation points to his feelings of guilt and betrayal toward his Flemish origin as part of his initial habitus. In his volume of verse *Offrande Filiale*, dedicated to his mother, Melloy presented a public account of his habitus clash, confessing to a francophone readership his inner conflict and guilty conscience:

Je lui [ma mère] procurais des livres flamands savoureux et édifiants à la fois, dont elle lisait chaque dimanche un chapitre. Je lui offrais aussi les miens, en rougissant. Une fois elle m'a dit: "C'est dommage qu'ils soient écrits en français: je voudrais tant les comprendre!" Mon coeur en a longtemps pleuré. A cause d'elle, pour elle, j'eusse voulu être un écrivain flamand. (Melloy 1931: 43)

[I procured her [my mother] Flemish books, both entertaining and edifying, of which she read each Sunday a chapter. Blushing, I also gave her mine. Once she told me: "It's a pity they're written in French: I would have so much liked to understand them!" It made my heart weep for a long time. Because of her, for her, I would have liked to be a Flemish writer.]

However, this discontinuity did not affect his stylistics. Although the rhythm of his poems was perceived as Flemish, influenced by the rhythm of popular Flemish songs and by his mother's dipping rhymes, Melloy composed in the purest, classical French, free of any Dutch-language interference. This hypercorrect style reflected Belgian francophone writers' internalized superiority of French as a literary language and search for recognition by the Parisian center (see also Meylaerts 2004). His pure French style also contributed to his success in France. Moreover, his private correspondence unmistakably illustrates this habitus-governed socio-stylistics when evaluating colleagues' style: "Et puis, un grand bravo pour l'écriture. C'est bien écrit, et ça, pour moi, c'est énorme. Les Belges écrivent si mal."<sup>24</sup> [And then, congratulations for the style. It's well written, and that, for me, is enormous. The Belgians write so badly.] Or: "J'ai lu *Le Cadavre ds [sic] le Silo*: un bon roman policier (...). Mais j'ai relevé un belgicisme: "Pas d'avance..." pour dire: Inutile!"<sup>25</sup> [I've read *Le Cadavre ds le Silo [sic]*: a good detective novel. (...) But I've noticed a Belgicism: "Pas d'avance..." instead of: Inutile!]

Melloy's choice of being a francophone author and his profound internalization of the superiority of the French language and literature did not restrain him from being a translator of Flemish literature into French. His Flemish origin, his early bilingualism, his feelings of guilt towards his betrayal of the Flemish language and literature, together with the sound moral image of Flemish literature in francophone Catholic milieus, may have contributed to his willingness to be a translator.<sup>26</sup> Melloy began to translate in 1931, nine years after his literary debut. His beginnings as a translator coincided with an increasing interest by francophone Catholics in Flemish literature in the early 1930s (see Vanderpelten 2004). As was suitable for a Catholic author-translator like Melloy, both the



Flemish authors and their translated works complied with all necessary ethical and religious requirements. In addition to translations in periodicals, he published nine volumes, all regionalist novels from contemporary Flemish authors,<sup>27</sup> especially Streuvels and Timmermans, best-selling Catholic authors who were successfully translated into the major European languages. More than once Melloy managed to have them published in France.

Not trained as a professional translator and working in a very weakly differentiated field, Melloy described himself primarily not as a translator but as a writer and a teacher. To a certain extent, translating was thus a secondary occupation for him. In his private correspondence, he never referred to his self-translations and often made complete abstraction of his ongoing translations of Flemish novels, even in letters to the Flemish novelists he translated. When, for example, at the end of the 1930s he quit his job as a secondary school teacher to become director-chaplain of an abbey in Flanders, he informed Streuvels, one of the authors he had been translating:

Nu ik maak het hier best. Weinig en rustig werk in mijn oude abdij, veel tijd voor wandelingen en schrijf- of dichtkunst. Een goeie oplossing. Ik kon onmogelijk schrijver én leeraar blijven — dat was te veel!<sup>28</sup>

[Now I'm doing well here. Little work and quiet work in my old abbey, plenty of time for walking, literature or poetry. A good solution. It was impossible for me to remain a writer and teacher — that was too much!]

If Melloy mentions his translations at all, it is with a rather negative undertone, to announce, for example, that they will no longer be part of his public image:

Personnellement, je n'attache pas d'importance à ma traduction, et, à partir de mon prochain bouquin, elle ne figurera même plus dans la liste de mes ouvrages.<sup>29</sup>

[Personally I do not attach any importance to my translation work and from my next book on, it won't figure anymore on my publication list.]

These private disavowals of his translation work were partly inspired by a negative experience with an editor's interventions done behind his back. He imputed them to his invisibility, in a translation that did not mention his name on the cover. Following the incident he became a fierce proponent of the translator's visibility: "*Toutes ces omissions proviennent de ce que notre nom de figure pas sur les couvertures: nous aurions pu — et dû — exiger qu'il y figurât.*"<sup>30</sup> [All these omissions result from the fact that our name doesn't figure on the covers: we could — and should — have required that it figure there].

However, these private disavowals of his translation activities were also inspired by negative reactions by some Flemish groups who considered him a traitor to the Flemish emancipation struggle (see Meylaerts 2004). As already mentioned,

translating between conflicting cultures in a diglossic society is likely to lead to a habitus clash for native bilinguals. Only in his public relationships with Flemish milieus that were favorable to translations into French did he stress both his friendship with Flemish authors and his translation activities:

Na den oorlog heb ik den schrijver van “Pallierter” leeren kennen. Ik houd zeer veel van hem. Ik vertaalde zijn “Driekoningentryptiek”, verschenen in 1931 bij Rex (Leuven) onder den titel “Triptyque de Noël” en ben nu ook klaar met de vertaling van “De Harp van St. Franciscus”. Van zijn kant illustreerde de Fé mijn “Louange des saints populaires” en “Triptyque de Noël”. (H.B. 1934: 4)

[After the War, I got to know the author of *Pallierter* [Timmermans]. I do love him very much. I translated his *Driekoningentryptiek*, published in 1931 by Rex (Leuven) under the title *Triptyque de Noël* and I’ve now finished the translation of *De Harp van St. Franciscus*. From his side, Fé illustrated my *Louange des Saints Populaires* and *Triptyque de Noël*.]

These kinds of position-taking betray Melloy’s wish to be considered a genuine Fleming, not a Gallicized one.

In his private correspondence Melloy associated literary translation, unlike authorship, more readily with making money, with a profession like any other, typical for an occupation with low (literary) prestige: “Je traduis une vie de Pie XI pr [sic] Desclée: je ‘gagne’ maintenant ma vie... en traduisant celle des autres.”<sup>31</sup> [I translate a life of Pius XI for [the publisher] Desclée: I earn a living... by translating the life of others.] Although he regularly complained about the low wages for translators,<sup>32</sup> he was repeatedly able to establish good conditions:

Je traduis pr [sic] Desclée, à de fort bonnes conditions, un commentaire sur l’Apocalypse. 10 à 15 frs la page. L’original flamand est mal écrit mais très intéressant. (...) Je compte traduire ces 200 pages en un mois, (...).<sup>33</sup>

[I translate for Desclée under very good conditions, a commentary on the Apocalypse. 10–15 FRS a page. The Flemish original is badly written but very interesting. (...) I plan to translate these 200 pages in one month].

J’envoie cette semaine mon manuscrit — “Timmermans raconte” Introduction et traduction de C.M. [sic] — à un nouvel éditeur qui me fait des conditions épatantes. Cela s’appelle Editions de l’Essor (c’est idiot à force de banalité) mais c’est financièrement sûr et le directeur est catholique. (...) Moi j’aimerais être admis chez Plon. Mais...<sup>34</sup>

[I’ll send this week my manuscript — *Timmermans raconte* Introduction and translation by C.M. — to a new publisher who gives me fabulous conditions. He is called Editions de l’Essor (so banal that it becomes idiotic) but he’s financially sound and the director is Catholic. (...) I myself would like to be admitted at Plon. But...]

Apparently, the literary value of a translation was of secondary importance in comparison to its financial advantages, again confirming Melloy's view on literary translation as a partly commercial, lower status occupation. In line with his literary habitus, he preferred a French to a Belgian publisher for his translations. Not surprisingly, the publisher's Catholic profile was also one of his conditions.

For Melloy, translating was related to literary writing; he saw it as a training school for developing or maintaining his literary style. "J'ai traduit un choix de nouvelles de Timmermans, pour me refaire la main"<sup>35</sup> [I've translated a selection of short stories by Timmermans in order to exercise myself], he wrote to a friend in 1940, only one year before his death. Not surprisingly, due to his early and profound internalization of the superiority of the French language and culture, the fact that he was entirely educated by French books, his translation strategies showed evidence of habitus-governed socio-stylistics. As a translator as much as a writer, Melloy used a correct, pure, classical French style, free of any Dutch-language interference. A vulgar style was the worst sin for him (Vanderpelen 2004). His translation strategies at the level of dialect, register and syntax illustrate this habitus-governed stylistics especially well. Flemish novels were appreciated by the Flemish reader for their innovative picturesque language. Using dialects and/or popular, oral language for reported speech, the Flemish authors wanted to give a voice to the people they depicted and (partly) wrote for. Their innovative style symbolized Flemish emancipation. Although Melloy originated from the very same milieu depicted by such novels, Melloy translated dialects and spoken language into standard French. He thus downplayed the picturesque character and the local flavor of the Flemish texts. His translations were more literary, completely in line with his linguistic and literary habitus but deviating from the contemporary translation norms (see above and see Meylaerts 2004). Comparing his translation strategy with that of a colleague, Melloy wrote to him: "Votre 'manière' diffère assez de la mienne. Vous attrapez mieux le ton populaire."<sup>36</sup> [Your way [of translating] is rather different from mine. You better capture the popular tone.] Melloy's linguistic and literary habitus was apparently too strong for him to do the same.

Similar observations apply to the syntactical level. Flemish novels of the time were appreciated for their use of very oral, sometimes plainly incorrect syntax and for mixing direct, indirect and free indirect speech in order to imitate the popular, oral way of telling stories. Melloy opted for well-balanced classical French clauses, and he separated direct and indirect speech, adapting the translations to French literary norms in accordance with his habitus. Interestingly, this less popular, more literary style was highly appreciated by the Flemish authors. Timmermans thought Melloy's translation of one of his novels equaled the original and congratulated him: "Dàt is vertalen! dit-il; il prétend que mon texte vaut l'original."<sup>37</sup> [That is

translating! he says; he pretends my text is as good as the original.] In general, Flemish authors were in fact opposed to popular(izing) French translations since they would only accentuate their inferior position in the eyes of the francophone target reader. In the end, the translator's habitus-governed socio-stylistics appears to have been a successful mix of his more French-oriented literary habitus and his partly Flemish initial habitus. Some of Melloy's fellow translators were more appreciated by the Belgian francophone readers because of their more popular translation style, symbolizing the inferiority of Flemish literature and the Flemish people.<sup>38</sup> For the very same reason, however, they were often criticized by Flemish authors and they rarely succeeded in publishing their translations in France (see Meylaerts 2004 and 2008).

## Conclusion

As Daniel Simeoni notes, "The habitus of a translator is the elaborate result of a personalized social and cultural history" (1998: 32). Since in many (past and present) cases the professional translation field is not (or only weakly) differentiated, the transposability of dispositions acquired through experiences related both to other fields and to a translator's larger life conditions and social trajectory may play a fundamental role in a translator's habitus. Research on translators' socio-biographies therefore deserves our special attention. For native literary author-translators who live and work in a diglossic society characterized by socio-linguistic conflicts between the translators' working languages, the plural and dynamic internalization of this conflict and of broader linguistic and cultural hierarchies is likely to form one of the constitutive aspects of their habitus and self-image, of their literary and translational behavior. However, fine-grained analysis concentrating on an individual translator's habitus and self-image and habitus-governed socio-stylistics should not be an end in itself. An individual translator's habitus becomes significant in relation to the field or fields in which he/she is located, in relation to larger typologies of translator behavior in specific contexts and in relation to translation norms as they manifest themselves in a series of translated texts. In other words, the interplay between agency and structure, between the individual and the collective, between habitus and norms constitutes the basis of any understanding of translation as a social activity.

## Notes

1. Among the recent publications that testify to this orientation, see Wolf and Fukari 2007, Pym, Shlesinger and Jettmarová 2006.
2. Notice how Sela-Sheffy's definition of a social habitus as a "unifying set of mentally and physically incorporated schemes that coordinate the individual's behaviour in all areas of life" (2005: 14) may give rise to a more deterministic interpretation.
3. For a short discussion of the concept of trajectory in relation to that of biography, see Hanna 2005: 188–189.
4. The term *society* is used here in its broad meaning and may refer to a nation-state, a region within a state, a city, and so on.
5. A nation-state is a form of socio-political organization developed to replace the structures of the Ancien Régime. In its ideal form it superposes a State (a political organization), a territory and a nation. The latter concept refers to the feeling of national unity resulting in an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991). The popular identification with the nation-state happens through national symbols like a national anthem, a national flag, but also a national language and a national literature.
6. Again, in principle, this territory may be a state, a region within a state, a city, etc. For example, within the actual Belgian state, linguistic institutionalization is organized according to regional principles: Dutch for the Flemish region, French for the Walloon region and bilingualism (French-Dutch) for the Brussels region.
7. The terms 'minority' and 'majority' do not refer here to numerical size but to power, to status as a result of institutionalization. On linguistic power mechanisms, see, e.g., Bourdieu 1982. See also the linguistic rights literature, e.g., Freeland & Patrick 2004.
8. 'Dutch' is the official term to refer to the language spoken in Flanders. 'Flemish' refers to culture, ethnicity and identity, e.g., in the designation of the actual federalised institutions like the Flemish Community and the Flemish Region. Historically, as illustrated by various quotations in this article, the term 'Flemish' also referred to the language, sometimes with a condescending flavor of 'amalgam of dialects'.
9. As already mentioned, institutionalization is a dynamic process. So, e.g., from the 1870s on successive laws on language use in administrative and judicial matters strengthened the position of Dutch next to that of French in Flanders but without modifying the dominant status of the latter.
10. Sela-Sheffy even states that more generally "There is no need to try and determine to what extent literary translators operate as part of the literary field, or form a separate field of their own. Both perspectives are right. The link of these translators to the literary field is obvious. In addition to being translators, some of them also pursue literary careers, mainly as editors, critics, poets and writers, and academic scholars. In many cases, the title "translator" does not even come first in their reputation" (2005: 11).
11. Stijn Streuvels left francophone secondary school at age fourteen to become a baker.

12. For more details, see Meylaerts 2004.
13. Quoted by Vanclooster, see <http://www.kantl.be.ctb/pub/2001/melloy> (accessed on 2 February 2009); all English translations of French or Dutch originals are mine.
14. Letter from Melloy to Roger Kervyn de Marcke ten Driessche, 28 November 1931.
15. At that time, rich noble families often had a private francophone teacher at home.
16. The Church has always played an important role in education in Belgium, and especially in Catholic Flanders. Catholic schools had to form a barrier against the godless public schools. Since most prestigious (secondary) catholic schools were francophone in Flanders up until the 1930s, they were also an important factor in the continuation of the existing language hierarchies.
17. Letter from Melloy to Marcel Lobet, 2 June 1935; emphasis in original.
18. Letter from Melloy to Lobet, 10 September 1941.
19. Letter from Melloy to Lobet, 30 June 1934.
20. Letter from Melloy to Lobet, 28 August 1934 (ML2688/40).
21. Letter from Melloy to Lobet, 23 September 1934 (ML2688/41). Note how Melloy uses here Dutch as a synonym for Flemish.
22. Letter from Melloy to Lobet, 10 November 1932.
23. Letter from Melloy to Stijn Streuvels, 4 February 1937 (AMVC, M457).
24. Letter from Melloy to Kervyn, 19 December 1934 (ML3577/114).
25. Letter from Melloy to Kervyn, 18 October 1934 (ML3577/124).
26. Compare: some bilingual Flemish contemporaries refused to be literary translators (see Meylaerts 2008).
27. Timmermans, *Triptyque de Noël* (1931), Timmermans, *La Harpe de Saint François* (1935), Streuvels, *L'Enfant de Noël*, Streuvels, *Contes à Poucette* (1935), Waegemans & Matthys, *La perle merveilleuse; féerie en un prologue et trois actes* (1935), Van Zeggelen, *Les débuts d'Arlequin* (1937), De Man, *Maria et son charpentier* (1941), Van der Heeren, *L'Apocalypse* (1941), Legrand, *Mon Carême* (1941).
28. Letter from Melloy to Streuvels, 20 March 1939.
29. Letter from Melloy to Kervyn, 27 January 1932.
30. Letter from Melloy to Kervyn, 27 January 1932.
31. Letter from Melloy to Kervyn, 14 February 1939.
32. Several letters to Roger Kervyn and to Stijn Streuvels contain evidence of this.
33. Letter from Melloy to Kervyn, 1941.

34. Letter from Melloy to Lobet, 28 January 1941.
35. Letter to Kervyn, 31 July 1940.
36. Letter from Melloy to Kervyn, 1932.
37. Letter from Melloy to Kervyn, 8 July 1941.
38. In this respect, it is no coincidence that it was his translator colleagues of francophone origin who excelled in rendering the popular tone.

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## The people behind the words

### Professional profiles and activity patterns of translators of Arabic literature into Hebrew (1896–2009)

Hannah Amit-Kochavi

Drawing on recent sociological trends in Translation Studies, the present article describes the making of those translators who were active in the field of Arabic-Hebrew literary translation in Palestine (later Israel) and their special characteristics as a particular group of professionals. An attempt will be made to describe and explain the ethnic, educational, professional and ideological characteristics of this particular population and its activity patterns, with special attention to patterns of cooperation among its members.

**Keywords:** Arabic-Hebrew literary translation, translators, translator questionnaire, activity patterns

The study of translators has been facilitated by tools developed in relation to the growing sociological orientation of Translation Studies. Thus, as recently suggested by Pym (2003) and Gambier (2007), among others, I will examine the socio-historical background against which the group of translators discussed below emerged and worked. In light of work by Simeoni (1998), Wolf (2007) and Sela-Sheffy (2005; 2008), I will then attempt to provide a picture of the translators' sociological environment. Following the suggestions of Agorny, I will characterize the translator group to be studied here in terms of "localized" research, which stresses the particular nature of the case study under discussion (Agorny 2007: 129). Using these tools, I will then elaborate on such features as ethnic origin, educational background and professional activity, as well as activity patterns.

My previous research in this area (Amit-Kochavi 2000, 2004) revealed the critical role played by Arabic-Hebrew literary translators in the initiation and maintenance of their field, which encouraged me to study translators active since

the late nineteenth century in an attempt to find out why they chose to be translators, what qualified them for this profession and how they acted, both individually and collectively.

My research draws on a questionnaire administered to ninety translators active in the field. The translators' responses are supplemented by data from interviews with some of them, as well as various written and oral materials, including translators' prefaces and afterwords to printed translations, entries in literary lexicons and encyclopedias, media interviews with translators, and obituaries and interviews with the relatives and colleagues of deceased translators. The research population comprised all of the 170 translators active in the field of Arabic-Hebrew literary translation. The term 'translator' applies here to any person whose Arabic-Hebrew literary translation(s) have been published, regardless of their number. The translators were identified through the use of a comprehensive unpublished bibliography of translations of Arabic literature into Hebrew, which I have been compiling since the 1970s.

The justification for this methodological choice derives from a desire to cover all of the data pertaining to this relatively small and under-researched field and from the fact that the impact of the translations on the Israeli Hebrew target culture did not always correspond to the extent and volume of a particular translator's activity, which depended on such factors as the translator's own prestige in this and other professional fields, such as academe and literature. The questionnaire included questions regarding such social factors as the translators' identity, ethnic affiliation, education, other professional and translational activities, attitudes toward Arabic-Hebrew translation and details concerning peers, which was necessary in order to reach as many translators as possible. (For an English translation of the questionnaire, see the appendix to the present article).

The translation field in which these translators have been active has existed since 1896 and has been greatly affected by socio-political changes in Jewish and Arab societies in Palestine (later Israel). I will therefore begin with a brief description of the historical and cultural background against which this field has evolved.

## Historical background

Under both the Ottoman rule over Palestine (1516–1917) and the British Mandate period (1917–1948), Arabs and Jews were two distinct communities, the former outnumbering the latter. Both groups enjoyed full religious and cultural autonomy, and maintained limited economic and social ties. Economic ties often involved an imbalance, with Jews as employers and Arabs as employees, and notwithstanding

the occasional personal friendship or even mixed marriage, many Jews never came into direct contact with Arabs as equals.

Despite some mutual attendance at cultural events, such as musical soirées and official celebrations during the late Ottoman period (Lev Tov 2009: 165–272), there was no active Jewish-Arab cooperation in the realm of culture, such as literature and the visual arts. While certain members of both communities could speak each other's language for various professional or demographic reasons, hardly any Arabs could read Hebrew and very few Jews could read standard Arabic.

Some Jews, however, were sufficiently interested in the Arabic language and culture to study it through private tutoring, in academic frameworks, or both. While Hebrew was not taught at Arab schools during that period, Arabic was taught at some Hebrew-speaking schools (Landau 1961; Rivlin 1968; Yonai 1992; Kinberg & Talmon 1994; Levy & Miro 1995; Amit-Kochavi 2000), in the hope that this might help to integrate the Jews more easily into their old-new homeland. This background accounts for both the scarcity of Arabic-Hebrew literary translation and the devoted efforts of those few Jews who regarded it as vitally important for the Zionist enterprise.

This situation changed with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, which reversed both the demographic and language imbalance between Jews and Arabs in the country due to the flight and expulsion of most of the Arab population, on the one hand, and massive Jewish immigration into the country immediately afterwards, on the other. As a result, Israel's two official languages, Hebrew, the main language of its Jewish majority, and Arabic, the main language of its Arab minority, have become unequal in terms of both command and use. Hebrew is the main language of study at Jewish schools and all Israeli universities and a compulsory second language in Arab schools as well. Arabic is the main language of study at Arab schools and is also the mother tongue of Jews born in Arab countries, most of whom speak a particular Arabic vernacular but have no command of the standard variety. Although in the mid-1980s it was officially declared to be a compulsory subject for all seventh to tenth grade Jewish students, Arabic is in fact studied as a third language by relatively few Jews at both the secondary and post-secondary level.

Most Israeli Jews consequently have little or no command of Arabic and are ignorant of its culture. This is further aggravated by the fact that, ever since the advent of Zionism, Arabs have been depicted by Hebrew culture as menacing gentiles, attractive others or noble savages. They have been portrayed both romantically and condescendingly in Israeli Hebrew adult (Domb 1982; Ramras-Rauch 1995) and children's (Cohen 1985) literature, visual arts (Zalmona and Manor-Friedman 1998), theater (Orian 1996) and cinema (Shohat 1991). This image has been reinforced by the permanent Jewish-Arab (later, Israeli-Arab) conflict, which has caused Israeli Jews to see Arabs as their mortal enemies.

While Israeli Hebrew literature has drawn heavily on translations from other foreign literatures to enrich its textual repertoire, using literary translation into Hebrew as a reservoir of models to be borrowed and imitated (Even Zohar 1990), Arabic literature has been largely overlooked and has occupied a marginal position in the Israeli Hebrew literary polysystem. All in all, the repertoire of translations from Arabic has included several thousand poems and short stories, forty novels, sixty anthologies, thirty collections and fifteen plays, as well as numerous translated excerpts, published in periodicals, newspapers and textbooks (Amit-Kochavi 2000, 2004a, 2004 b, 2007, 2008). While these numbers may seem impressive, they comprise the product of 113 years of translation activity during which most published translations were little read by the general public. Although they often attracted the attention of literary critics, they were mostly seen as texts connoting oriental fascination or as tools for fostering better sociopolitical familiarity with the Arab world rather than simply as works of literature judged by their literary value (Amit-Kochavi 2000: 269–318).

### **Ethnic affiliation**

The 170 translators of Arabic literature into Hebrew may be subdivided by ethnicity into Jews (145, or 86%) and Arabs and Druze (25, or 14%). Jewish translators may be further subdivided into natives and immigrants. The earliest native translators from Arabic into Hebrew lived in Jerusalem during the early twentieth century under the Ottoman rule and were natives of Palestine and members of merchant families that had emigrated from Iraq. They had Arab neighbors and spoke Arabic. Like members of some other Jewish families at the time, Yosef Meyuhas (1868–1942) spent a happy childhood in the Arab village of Silwan, while the two brothers, Avraham Shalom (1877–1951) and Yitzhaq Yehezkel (1863–1941) Yahuda and their relatives and colleagues, David Yellin (1864–1941) and Yosef Yoel Rivlin (1889–1971), grew up in Jerusalem.

By contrast, other Jewish native translators born between the 1920s and the 1970s seldom experienced Arabic as an everyday spoken language. In some cases, however, the origin of the translators' families, some of which had emigrated from various Arab countries, affected their decision to study Arabic and translate Arabic literature into Hebrew. Thus, some translators who had parents or grandparents who had emigrated from Iraq (e.g., Reuven Snir [Sha'rabaani] (1953 — )) or Morocco (e.g., Ami Elad-Bouskila (1950 — )), translated Arabic works of those countries in order to reconnect themselves to their respective family backgrounds, on the one hand, and to give these cultures a presence within Hebrew culture, on the other (Amit-Kochavi, 2009).

Most of the translators since the 1970s were Jews born either before or after the establishment of the state of Israel, whose families originated from either European or Arab countries. This was due to the growing availability of higher education, on the one hand, and to the increasing tendency of second and especially third generation Jews from Arab countries to seek their ethnic roots, on the other.

The earliest immigrants to Palestine included very few Arabic-Hebrew translators, since most active Zionists were concerned with the construction of modern Hebrew culture, in which Arabic occupied a peripheral position. Arabic was now used by such innovators of modern Hebrew as David Yellin, who insisted on adopting an Arabic accent for modern spoken Hebrew, and Eliezer Ben Yehouda, a major contributor to modern Hebrew speech and vocabulary. The latter stated in the introduction to his Hebrew dictionary that he considered Arabic and Hebrew to be almost one and the same language and therefore freely borrowed and adapted Arabic roots and vocabulary to coin new Hebrew words (Ben Yehouda 1940/1960: 10).

The earliest immigrants' contribution to the field under study was important, since some of them, e.g., Menachem Kapeliuk (1900–1988), were pioneers of modern Arabic literary translation. Some of these translators came from Russia and others from Germany. Together they were the main actors in the field from the 1930s to the 1970s due to their access to higher education and their consequent command of the written variety of Arabic and its literature.

Jewish immigrants from Arab countries, especially those of Iraqi origin, arrived in Israel in the early 1950s with a good command of Arabic. Their knowledge of Hebrew was limited to the language of religious services. Therefore, they could start translating only after having acquired modern written and spoken Hebrew, instruction in which was freely provided to immigrants by the state of Israel at the time in order to facilitate the assimilation of new immigrants. For some of these individuals, learning Hebrew became a means to retain their Arab cultural identity by translating Arabic literature into Hebrew. While immigrants from other Arab countries by and large succumbed to the Zionist melting-pot cultural policy, which required immigrants to give up their native languages and cultures and to adopt the official language as the exclusive tool of cultural identity (as often happens in countries that take in large groups of immigrants), many Iraqi Jews insisted on retaining the Arab part of their identity (Moreh 1997; Somekh 2004, 2008; Snir 2005) and used translation as a means to this end.

As described above, prior to the establishment of Israel, most Arabs' command of Hebrew was limited and colloquial and they were not involved in Arabic-Hebrew literary translation and did not enjoy its social or cultural benefits. On the one hand, the 1948 War resulted in a Jewish victory and the Jewish population doubled as a result of the massive immigration from both Europe and the Arab

countries in the early 1950s. Jews soon became the majority while the Arabs turned into a minority and were subjected to a strict military government, which lasted until 1966. Most Arab intellectuals left in 1948, and the remaining few became completely isolated from the Arab world and its cultural activity and were subject to the domination of Israeli Hebrew culture. Up to the 1970s the Arab educational and literary systems and media were strictly supervised by government-appointed Jews, mostly immigrants from Arab countries (Osacki-Lazar 1990).

On the other hand, since the 1950s, the first generation of Israeli-born and bred Arabs has been educated in a separate state-regulated educational system, and their command of Hebrew has taken on the value of a symbolic and economic good worth possessing (Sela-Sheffy 2005). This was reinforced by the Arabs' need to define themselves as an ethno-political group living in Israel, unable to affiliate fully with co-nationals from whom they were geopolitically separated or with the Israeli Jewish majority, which did not readily accept them. Translation of Arabic literature into Hebrew became a useful tool in the attempt to reconcile the contradictory Arab and Israeli parts of the Israeli Arab identity. It helped Israeli Arabs to combine their socio-cultural promotion within the target culture with fidelity to their original ethno-political group, thereby propagating both personal and group interests.

Although most of the Arabs in Israel are Muslim, most Arabic-Hebrew translators have been Christian. Their special status as a Christian minority within the Arab minority has made them particularly eager to be accepted and promoted both by the predominant Jewish culture and by their own Muslim co-nationals. The Druze, an even smaller ethno-religious minority group, speak Arabic and share many Arab social customs with other Arabic-speaking communities. Their co-religionists live in Syria and Lebanon, but they have chosen — in congruence with Druze traditional attitudes towards whatever ruling state they live in — to serve in the Israeli army and are therefore considered by Israeli Jews as more similar to themselves and as more loyal than other Arabs. This has made the definition of their self-identity particularly complex, as the Israeli Druze have oscillated between allegiance to other Druze groups, to Arabs as a whole, and to the state of Israel.

In order to try and reconcile these contradictions while also standing out as a distinct group, Druze translators from Arabic into Hebrew have translated Arabic literature written in Israel by Druze and Arab writers alike, while other Arab translators have preferred to translate works by Israeli and Palestinian writers depicting the social and political problems facing these communities. With very few exceptions, the first generation of Arab Arabic-Hebrew literary translators has not been succeeded by a next generation, possibly due to the increasing Palestinization of the Arabs in Israel since the first Intifada (1991), which has drawn them closer, politically and culturally, to the Palestinian Arab side of their identity and further away from the Israeli side.

## Education

Since the vast majority of the 170 translators discussed here have translated directly from Arabic into Hebrew, it is worth looking at the venues of both their source and target language acquisition. The earliest translators, all natives of Palestine, had a good command of Arabic, combining daily use, private lessons taken with local Arabs and higher education in Arabic and Islam in Germany, at the time an important venue of Arabic studies. This practice preceded the establishment of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the first university in Palestine (1925), and its Arabic department (1926). Their written and spoken Hebrew was acquired at Jewish schools and they were among the first native Hebrew speakers in Palestine.

Most members of the subsequent generations of Jewish translators, including both native and European immigrant translators active from the 1940s to the present, were formally trained in Arabic and most of them had no direct contact with Arabs. Some specialized in Arabic in high school and most were academically trained at Israeli universities. They studied Hebrew at school and spoke it as their main language. The Israeli Defense Forces represent a unique Arabic-learning framework. Some of the soldiers trained as Arabic-Hebrew translators took up the profession when they returned to civilian life. Most of the Arab translators, by contrast, hail from a single generation, born in the 1940s and 1950s, and were educated in the Israeli school system, where they studied Arabic as their first language and Hebrew as their second. By the late 1960s and the 1970s, they were studying in the predominantly Hebrew Israeli academic system, becoming the first Israeli Arab generation whose command of both languages allowed them to engage in Arabic-Hebrew translation. Only a few individuals in either of these ethnic groups are graduates of the few translator training programs offered intermittently at some Israeli universities and colleges since the 1970s. These programs are not seen by the Israeli translation community as a prerequisite for becoming a practicing translator.

## Occupations

The vast majority of translators' other professional occupations have been linked to their command of Arabic. Translation was their secondary occupation due to the small demand for translation and the low status of the profession. Jewish translators included Arabic teachers and lecturers in Arabic, Islam and Middle Eastern history, press and broadcast journalists specializing in Arab affairs, Foreign Ministry employees, a librarian, a manuscript and art merchant, and a censor. Some Jewish journalists, particularly immigrants from Arab countries, occupied prominent positions in the Israeli Arab media from the 1950s to the 1970s. This was



due both to their command of Arabic and to the Israeli official policy at the time, which placed Arabic culture in Jewish rather than Arab hands. These professionals were gradually replaced by native Arabs due to their own aging and to the gradual depletion of this reservoir, as well as a relatively more liberal Israeli policy towards its Arab citizens since the 1970s.

Of the Jewish translators, 24 (14%) have been writers and poets, mostly minor ones, for whom translation was an outlet for artistic drives and an attempt to achieve greater recognition than their own Hebrew or Arabic writing had allowed. Academics often translated the objects of their research or asked their colleagues and students to perform this task. Several lecturers of modern Arabic literature compiled and (co)edited anthologies of Arabic prose or poetry, either translating the texts themselves or asking for the help of some of their (ex-)students. They often used their academic prestige, more highly valued in Israeli Jewish culture than their translational activity, to promote their translation projects. Many Arab and Druze translators have worked as school teachers and directors, this being the most accessible socio-economic venue for educated members of these ethnic groups in Israel.

The proportion of writers and poets among Arab and Druze translators has been particularly large (12 out of 25; i.e., 48%) as has the proportion of journalists (7 out of 25; i.e., 28%). Both of these occupations attract members of the Israeli Arab intelligentsia. Some Arab and Druze translators were also active in the Hebrew media, which have employed a few Arab professionals since the 1970s, as the Israeli establishment gradually grew to recognize the Arab presence in Israel and the rights of its Arabic minority. Unlike their Jewish counterparts, however, none of the few Arab university lecturers in Arabic literature have translated Arabic literature into Hebrew. Two Druze lecturers, by contrast, both of whom are Arabic and Hebrew poets, have been active translators and editors of anthologies outside the scope of their academic interests. Unlike their Jewish counterparts, they did not use translation to promote their academic careers but rather to reconcile their ethnic Druze identity with their intense involvement with Israeli Hebrew culture.

### **Ideological attitudes**

All 170 translators studied here expressed ideological positions in favor of the resolution of the Jewish-Arab conflict and Jewish-Arab coexistence in Palestine (later Israel), combined with an ardent belief that Arabic-Hebrew literary translation could and should contribute to these ends .

Among the earliest translators were those few Jews who believed that it was in the interest of Palestinian Jews to have a command of the Arabic language and culture and to maintain good relations with local Arabs. By translating ancient Arabic poetry and Islamic traditions, published in the Zionist magazine *Luah Eretz Yisrael* [The Palestine Annual] (1896–1916), they strove to present ancient Arabic literature and values as moral rather than literary models for imitation by the then-nascent Hebrew culture (Amit-Kochavi 2004a).

Similar ideological positions were expressed by the later generations of translators in personal and media interviews, in the translator questionnaire used in the present study, and in the epigraphs, prefaces and afterwords included by these translators in their translations. Thus, for example, Natan Zach, a Hebrew poet, and Rashed Hussein, an Arab poet, cooperated closely as translators and editors of an anthology of translated Arab folksongs they named *Palms and Dates*, published immediately following the Six Day War (1967). In their foreword to the anthology, they nostalgically dwelt on similar translation projects, presumably carried out “in days of greater liberalism and empathy, a time of calm and peace” (Zach and Hussein, 1967: 2). They contrasted those ideal bygone days with “[the present] days of hatred and violence when this small book is published, comprising simple tranquil songs,” adding that “one cannot help expressing the following wish: May these collected translations, produced by an Arab poet and a Hebrew one, also attest to the possibility of cooperation, dialogue and respect for the Other’s literary work that we expect all civilized human beings to adopt” (ibid.). Zach and Hussein present the very act of joint translation, as well as the naive contents of the translated folksongs, as ideologically inflected. Despite their direct reference to the politically significant date of publication and to their own respective ethnic affiliations, they generally speak of “cooperation, dialogue and respect,” hopefully practicable by “all civilized human beings,” with no direct reference to the political solution of the Jewish-Arab conflict.

A similar but more overtly political position is taken by Shimon Ballas, a Hebrew writer and professor of modern Arabic literature, in his introduction to a collection of three novellas by Ghassan Kanafani that depict the plight of the Palestinian refugees: “No tool is more faithful than literature in reflecting both individual and communal life, nor is any tool more effective than literature for achieving mutual understanding between nations. Kanafani, the enemy writer... proved this through his work, possibly refuting his own thesis that no understanding between us and the Palestinians is possible” (Ballas 1978: 12).

This rather utopian belief was repeatedly stressed in all kinds of translated texts, whether with political contents, like the one quoted above, or not. It was also repeatedly mentioned as an important factor in the translators’ own decision to take up their vocation.

## Translator work patterns

The field of Arabic-Hebrew literary translation has witnessed different types of co-operation between translator couples and within translator teams. Since the very existence of the field has depended on the translators' ability to act as catalysts and promoters of their own translations and those of others, it would seem logical to join forces and cooperate in a wide range of projects. Most translators, however, did not work as groups with a clear poetic or ideological policy and did not enjoy the social, psychological or economic support offered by such membership. Their work patterns include a variety of models adopted in accordance with their personal inclinations and social and professional circumstances, as well as networks created in their dominant occupation, often reinforced within the field of translation.

Most of the translators discussed here have worked in isolation, since Arabic-Hebrew translation was for them a personal pursuit, either academic or literary in nature. They often chose the texts to be translated and some of them edited collections of their own translations. Some also cooperated in partnerships or teams, either as initiators and organizers or by participating in the projects of others.

Work in pairs followed a number of different cooperation patterns. Cooperation was meant to save time and effort and make use of either partner's particular professional expertise. Partnerships were created on either an equal or unequal basis, according to each partner's position vis-à-vis the other both within the translation field and in other fields, especially the academic and literary ones.

Most partnerships were created ad hoc, based on personal and professional ties, and involved one of the following variations:

1. One of the partners, an Arab or a Jew, had a better command of Arabic than the other.
2. One partner possessed specialized academic or other knowledge of the topic.
3. The text was translated by one partner and edited by the other.
4. A collection or anthology was translated and edited by two partners of either equal or unequal academic or literary positions.
5. A translation job was referred by one partner to another.

Permanent author-translator partnerships were rare. In two prominent cases, a particular author's work was exclusively translated by a single translator due to the total failure of the author's work in the first case and to its great success in the second one.

In the first instance, the Arabic novellas and short stories of Samir Naqqash (1938–2004), a Jewish Arabic writer of Iraqi origin, were rejected by both source and target cultures due to their unconventional language and style. The writer's

sister Ruthie Naqqash-Vigisser, who was not a professional translator, translated some of her brother's work into Hebrew out of personal fidelity, in a futile attempt to help.

In the second instance, the novellas of Emile Habiby (1921–1996), a prominent Israeli Palestinian writer, were brilliantly translated into Hebrew by Anton Shammās (1950 — ), an Israeli Arab translator who occupied a prominent position in the Hebrew target culture at the time. Habiby consequently became the only Arab writer to be awarded the Israel Prize for literature (1992), thanks to the success of the Hebrew translations, and in media interviews he voiced his insistence on the exclusive translation of his entire oeuvre by Shammās. In both cases, then, this type of cooperation was an attempt to guarantee the most promising venue for the writer's success in the target culture.

In some cases shared sociological characteristics have resulted in the emergence of translator pairs in the same family. Family relations have included pairs of brothers, brothers-in-law or fathers and daughters. Despite the shared profession, there was only a single case of actual cooperation, when a father, Mattityahu Peled (1924–1995), a professor of modern Arabic literature, asked his daughter Nurit Peled-Elhanan (1948 — ), a literary translator from English and French into Hebrew, to help him polish a translation of an ancient Arabic poem, combining his expertise in Arabic literature with his daughter's experience as a literary translator.

Despite the numerous examples of teamwork, there were very few permanent translator groups. The two major groups found in the field under discussion included people who shared many of the characteristics studied here, and this strong resemblance in their personal and professional profiles was at the foundation of their consolidation into a group, reinforced by their cooperation in other fields. The first was the earliest translator group active during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which shared all the socio-cultural elements examined here — ethnic and educational background, close family ties and ideological positions. As mentioned above, they published the bulk of their translations in a single literary magazine, and did not publish anywhere else when the magazine closed.

The second group shared both ethnic origin and ideological positions and some of its members were university professors or writers, or both. This group consisted of some immigrants from Iraq who were active as literary translators from the late 1950s. They had grown up in Iraq as Jews with a strong Arab cultural identity and had been Arabic poets and journalists. After immigrating to Israel, they replaced their Arabic writing with writing in Hebrew. While publishing their translations in many different venues, they also cooperated as editors and translators in *Iton 77* [1977 Magazine] (1977 — present), a literary journal that has given high priority to translations of Arabic literature, and they cooperated on

occasion in projects initiated by some group members. Occasionally a different type of group formed ad hoc for special issues of the journal, for anthologies and for a series of novels. In such cases a translator-editor would invite fellow translators with whom he had worked on a regular or occasional basis, using his social and professional networks to locate them.

Jewish-Arab cooperation is to be expected in an ideologically motivated translation field such as the one under discussion, and indeed it has been relatively high in Arabic-Hebrew translations for the stage (Amit-Kochavi 2007; 2008) when work was often carried out by Arab-Jewish translator-director/actor pairs. Other sections of the field, however, have by and large reflected the overall Jewish dominance of the Israeli cultural scene and the separation between the respective Jewish and Arab systems. Each ethnic group has kept very much to itself. Jews acting as editors and project initiators have cooperated with their Jewish peers; Arab editors have cooperated with both Arab and Jewish peers; and Druze editors have cooperated exclusively with their Druze peers. It is worth noting here that only those Arab editors who have been active in both the Arab and Jewish literary systems were asked by Israeli cultural institutions dedicated to Jewish-Arab cooperation to edit translated anthologies, collections and literary magazines. This is the only setting in which Arab translators occupy a position that is higher than that of their Jewish peers.

### **Conclusions and suggestions for further research**

The present study has attempted to describe a particular translator population and its work patterns, stressing both the translators' ideological positions vis-à-vis their translational activity and the direct impact of historical and political changes in Israeli society on their ethnic, educational and professional characteristics. It has drawn a detailed portrait of these translators as a distinct professional group striving to preserve a peripheral translation field within an indifferent, even hostile target culture. For these translators, Arabic-Hebrew translation has served both as a venue for their anti-consensual ideological positions vis-à-vis the Jewish-Arab conflict and as a means of reconciling the part of their identity linked to the Arabic language and culture with its Hebrew part. This also applies to Jewish immigrants from Arab countries and to native Israeli Arabs and Druze. Literary translation from Arabic into Hebrew has also been a component in their professional profile and identity, complementing their other Arabic-dependent professions, and has served as an outlet for the literary aspirations of those translators who were practicing writers and poets, and possibly also of those who were not.

Further research may move from the general picture drawn here to a more detailed study of individuals, pairs and groups. This line of investigation may include comparative studies conducted with partners from other translation fields and language and culture pairs interested in finding out which characteristics are common to literary translators as a whole and which are exclusively typical of particular translation populations. Another possible research direction could be the study of the characteristics and work patterns of other individuals and groups of people, such as editors and publishers, who are also active in the translation field. This type of study may be conducted in order to explore these cultural agents in their own right and to examine their professional relations with their counterparts in the same field. By providing the sociological profiles of these research populations and linking them with their roles in the translation field, we hope to further expand our understanding of the contribution of individuals to the existence and development of the field.

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## Appendix. Questionnaire for translators of Arabic literature into Hebrew

### Personal data

Name and surname (including previous ones)

Religion and nationality

Present address

Birthplace (city / village; country)

### Education

#### High school

Name and location of school (city/ village and country)

#### Academic or other education

University



Name and location

Studies for the degree of

In the field/s of

During the years

**College**

Name and location

Studies for the degree of

In the field/s of

During the years

**Other educational institutes**

Name and location

Studies for the degree of

In the field/s of

During the years

**Command of languages**

**Command of Arabic**

As mother tongue

At high school

At the university

At college

Self-taught

Other

**Command of Hebrew**

As mother tongue

At high school

At the university

At college

Self-taught

Other

**Command of translation skills**

**University education**

Name and location

Studies for a degree/ certificate

During the years

Self-taught

Other

**College education**

Name and location

Studies for a degree/ certificate

During the years

Self-taught

Other

**Professional occupation(s)**

**Journalist**

Arab affairs/ Middle East expert

Other

In the Arab press / media

In the Hebrew press / media

**Teacher**

Arabic / Middle East History and Islam

Other

**Translator from other languages**

Language(s)

From/ into

**Writer/poet**

In Arabic

In Hebrew

Other

**Translation activity**

**The Initial stage**

Reasons for initiation of translation activity

Personal initiative

Others' initiative (please elaborate)

Ideological reasons (please elaborate)

Other (please elaborate)

**Your first translation**

Commissioned by

Done at your own initiative

Book title

Journal (title, number and page numbers)

Anthology (title and page numbers)

Literary supplement (journal title, literary section title, page numbers)

Other

Location of publication

Publisher

Date of publication

**Other translations made by you**

**Published translations**

Commissioned by

Done at your own initiative

Book title

Journal (title, number and page numbers)

Anthology (title and page numbers)

Literary section (journal title, section title, page numbers)

Other

Location of publication

Publisher

Date of publication

**Unpublished translations**

Commissioned by

Done at your own initiative

**Why the translation was not published**

Economic reasons (please elaborate)

Political reasons (please elaborate)

Ideological reasons (please elaborate)

Other reasons (please elaborate)

**Your attitude towards Arabic-Hebrew literary translation**

**Arabic-Hebrew literary translation is important for** (please mark all relevant items and elaborate as much as you wish):

Mutual understanding between Jewish and Arab Israeli citizens

Greater familiarity with Arab literature and culture

Israeli integration in the Middle East

'Know your enemy'

Broadening your horizons

**I consider my activity as an Arabic-Hebrew literary translator**

A major activity

A marginal activity

**Other Arabic-Hebrew literary translators I know**

Name

Address

Current workplace

**Further remarks and suggestions**

All information included in this questionnaire is to remain confidential and will be used for academic purposes only.

Thank you for your cooperation!

## Revised translations, revised identities

### (Auto)biographical contextualization of translation

Elena Baibikov

This article is a case study that aims to illustrate the process of formation of one translator's professional identity and to discuss the shifts in translators' professional behavior at different stages of the translators' life in relation to changing social and personal settings. It will focus on three Japanese versions of one Russian text, Anton Chekhov's letters to his wife, all produced by Yuasa Yoshiko (family name first), a female translator of Russian literature, whose professional career began in the late 1920s. From the 1990s on, especially after the establishment of the Yuasa Yoshiko Award for the best translation of a foreign language stage play in 1994, she has become the focus of several academic studies and biographical works. Surprisingly enough, none of these emphasizes her translation activities or focuses on the texts of her translations. The purpose of the present study is to fill this lacuna in the research on Yuasa.

**Keywords:** translator's biography, professional task of the translator, revised translations, translator's identities

#### “Who am I” and “what do I do”

Yoshiko was born on 7 December 1896, the sixth child of Yuasa Zenkichi, a fishmonger in Kyoto. The year before Yoshiko's birth, her elder brother Zenjiro died at the age of nine, and her parents expected another boy to “replace” their dead son. Her birth was thus greeted with the following response from the father: “Oh, what's that, a girl again?” The mother said nothing, but the phrase “if you had only been a boy” later became a standard refrain (Sawabe 1990: 85).<sup>1</sup>

It was a symptomatic reaction in a way, a reflection of the social realities experienced by Japanese people in the Meiji period (1868–1912), a time of painful transition from an agricultural society to a modern nation-state. These realities were indeed critical. The emergence of a feminist movement seeking equal rights

for women in politics, the home and the workplace took place in Japan in the mid-Taisho period (late 1910s-early 1920s), propelled both by a need to present the interests of women as a disadvantaged group and by an identity crisis among young women from urban areas (Tipton 2002: 94). Yuasa Yoshiko was one of these women, and her case represents one of the many possible ways to address an identity crisis or crises in a given time and place.

In *Identity in Formation*, David Laitin notes that the two faces of culture (primordial and instrumental) “reveal identities to be real and given,” on the one hand, and “constructed and reconstructed as social opportunities change,” on the other (Laitin 1998: 20). For Laitin, personal identities, such as one’s name, gender and race, are captured (traditionally) as primordial by “popular understanding” (see also Jenkins 2004), while social identities are “built” (Laitin 1998: 16) and negotiated within a network of inter-subjective relations. Thus, a person’s gender identity may be fixed in early childhood and remain thereafter static,<sup>2</sup> while a person’s understanding and acceptance of gender roles (that is, one’s gender role identity) may continue to develop well into adulthood (Ovesey and Person 1973: 54). However, as Yuasa Yoshiko’s case would seem to illustrate, the continuous process of self-invention may also involve the quest for one’s own name.

At the age of ten Yoshiko was adopted by her aunt.<sup>3</sup> Educational policies implemented by the state in Meiji Japan prescribed that boys and girls beyond elementary school be educated in separate schools, so her wealthy adoptive parents enrolled her in Kyoto Municipal High School for girls in 1909. To help students develop the necessary socialization skills of the Meiji period, most elite girls’ schools had a special curriculum that was designed to encourage refined taste and modest character, and emphasize the importance of the “good wife, wise mother” maxim. The curriculum of girls’ high schools was not the academic equal of the one provided in schools for boys. The education imposed on girls attending those schools was designed to prepare them for fulfilling their domestic duties and little else. It was strongly connected with the development of a conventional gender-role identity.

During the educational process, one builds a cognitive as well as an emotional map of the world, and at the same time learns to see oneself as a participant in and a contributor to cultural practices. The gender role identity prescribed by the Meiji authorities would then have been one of the first identities Yuasa Yoshiko acquired. However, the kind of “family life” that Yoshiko experienced at home<sup>4</sup> gradually made her skeptical of marital relations in particular and relationships between a man and a woman in general.

Her living conditions certainly improved when she was adopted by a wealthier family, but her mental well-being was compromised. The trauma of this experience yielded a life-long search for identity for, while she lived with a different family and was given a different name, she felt a continuing attachment to her

biological parents, especially her mother. As she moved between the two families, her personal identity was frequently contested.

Naturally, Yoshiko wanted to detach herself from this environment, and she was in constant search of a new self: personally (“Who am I?”) as well as professionally (“What do I do?”). Read with this in mind, Yoshiko’s first essay, “The Rain,” published in 1912 under the pen-name Yuasa Akiko, may be interpreted as an act of self-invention, an attempt to create a new professional and personal self, to act as a writer (rather than a restaurant manager like her stepfather, or a fishmonger like her biological father) and to use for matters of publication her real family name, Yuasa (rather than her adoptive name Inoue).<sup>5</sup>

To understand what being a professional actually means and to recognize one’s own identity as a member of a profession, one must undergo a process of initiation, which, in Kim Adams’ words, “is dependent on the existence of role models... [that] exert influence on the cognitive stages of professional socialization” (Adams et al 2006: 57). While still a high school student, Yoshiko could not really follow, let alone oppose, any professional role model. In fact, she could hardly receive professional guidance from the members of the literary profession. However, she at least could try to contact some of them.

Impressed by *Kuroshio* [Black Current], a novel by Tokutomi Roka (a famous Japanese writer), she wrote a letter to the author, in which she attempted to describe her feelings and impressions. Surprisingly, she soon received a reply from Tokutomi and an invitation to visit him if she should happen to be in Tokyo. She tried to do so in April of 1913, but unfortunately the writer was not at home. Two years later, Yoshiko used the same “strategy” — an epistolary contact followed by a personal visit — to meet Tamura Toshiko, a female novelist from the realist literary school, and other members of the profession as well. However, in the end, Yoshiko did not adjust well to the professional world of writers, first and foremost because she lacked confidence (Sawabe 1990: 123).

Unsure of her future as a writer, Yoshiko was already thinking of alternative professional opportunities in the beginning of 1917, her second year of studying Russian with one of the apprentices of Nobori Shomu, a well-known scholar of Russian literature at the time. In June 1917, Nobori invited Yoshiko and others to work on a translation of “Malen’kii geroi” [A Little Hero] by Fedor Dostoevsky. Yoshiko felt confident enough to accept this invitation. For her, it was an opportunity to gain deeper insight into the practice of translation.

At the beginning of 1918, she learned printing and publishing and began to publish a literary magazine of her own, *Shakko*. This was Yoshiko’s chance to simultaneously perform two professional identities: that of “publisher” and “translator.” The first issue of *Shakko* contained Yoshiko’s translation of Dostoevsky’s “A Little Hero,” and in the second issue she published the first part of her translation

of Alexander Kuprin's novel *Yama: The Pit*. This publication, which represented a shockingly detailed account of life in the red-light district of Odessa, led to the seizure by the police of all copies of the issue. Mired in problems, such as government censorship of its allegedly anti-social content, the magazine ceased publication in 1919. To pay a fine of forty yen, Yoshiko found employment as an editor for Nanbokusha Publishers. It was the beginning of her professional career as an editor, but she never took this work seriously.<sup>6</sup>

April of 1924, when Yuasa Yoshiko first met the female proletarian writer Chujo Yuriko (her friend and then her lover), was a good time for her to begin a new life. In February, following her father's remarriage, Yoshiko set up a separate household. She was not yet self-confident, but at least she was independent and in search of new opportunities, personal as well as professional. In May, about one month after she and Yuriko had met through their mutual friend, the writer Nogami Yaeko, Yuriko went to the countryside in Fukushima prefecture to concentrate on her writing. Yoshiko remained in Tokyo. Through the hundreds of letters they exchanged, Yoshiko became acquainted with, among other things, her friend's "ideology of working," her opinions and position in regard to professionalism.

What was needed for a healthy and fruitful relationship was not, in their opinion, mutual sacrifice but mutual improvement of their professional and personal capabilities. Gradually, Yoshiko became motivated to revise her own attitudes. In January 1927, after resigning from the editorship, she went to a mountain resort in the Tochigi prefecture to work on a new translation project. There she reflected and reproduced the professional behavior she had observed in Yuriko and Nobori Shomu.

Peter Bush describes the professionalism of a literary translator in terms of three requirements: a translator must be professional in reading, researching and writing. For a long time, Yuasa had been in close contact with writers, such as Tamura Toshiko, Nogami Yaeko, and Chujo Yuriko (and many others), and had thus been able to adopt their behavior as a role model for creating her own occupational identity. Through continuous observation she eventually internalized the professional attitudes of these "text creators." Furthermore, by the time she decided to translate Chekhov's letters, Yuasa Yoshiko had already been working as an editor for more than five years, an experience which brought her to the level of a "professional" reader. In addition, she had gained the skills necessary to analyze texts critically and understand them in depth. The whole process of internalizing professional values and norms took Yoshiko about fourteen years — from her first published essay in 1912 to early 1927, when she finally made her professional choice and began to focus entirely on translation. Luckily, in 1923, three years before she decided to enter the profession, the translation royalties system was established, promising better economic conditions to the practitioners in the field (Yonekawa 1962).

Below, I will turn to an analysis of Yuasa Yoshiko's translations of Chekhov's letters to Olga Knipper-Chekhova in order to examine how the reconstruction of her self-identification, especially within the wider socio-historical contexts of pre- and post-war Japan, was expressed in a series of textual transformations.

### Yuasa Yoshiko and Chekov's letters to his wife: The beginning

As mentioned above, Yuasa Yoshiko's professional career as a translator began in January 1927, when she resigned from *Aikoku Fujin Kikanshi*, completed the translation of Chekhov's letters and sent the manuscript to Shincho Publishers.<sup>7</sup> During the next thirty years, Yoshiko revised her translation and produced two additional versions thereof: in 1939–1940 a revised and expanded version of the translation was published by Sogensha Publishers, and in 1955–1957 Iwanami Shoten published a second re-translation of the letters.

Although the revision of previous translations was perceived by Yoshiko as an essential part of a translator's professional behavior, Chekhov's letters to his wife seem to be a rather special case for her. Unlike other translations, she revised the letters twice in a comparatively short period of time. In both cases, large-scale revisions were made: the title of the translation was changed, some passages were omitted and others were added, and a different system of notation was applied. Thus, from the point of view of Yoshiko, the translation of Anton Chekhov's letters to his wife appear to have had particular significance. Here the "recidivous" choice of the same source text appears almost as a confession, and the process of translation as "an opportunity for simultaneous self-telling and self-invention" (Nikolaou 2008: 55).

In April 1925, one month after she and Yuriko had begun to live together, Yoshiko received the original edition of *Anton Chekhov's Letters to Olga Knipper-Chekhova* — a book she had ordered from the bookstore Borisov & Petrov Partnership in Harbin several months earlier. About this time, Yoshiko's perception of gender roles underwent further change. She was now able to establish a marriage-like relationship with another woman and to practice an androgynous gender-role identity, i.e., an identity with a certain balance of masculine and feminine traits.

It is not unlikely that the correspondence between Chekhov and Olga Knipper (first the writer's fiancée and then his wife) attracted Yoshiko because of certain similarities between her own romantic relationship with Yuriko and the relationship of the famous Russian writer and the actress of the Moscow Art Theatre. The letters Yuriko and Yoshiko exchanged in June 1925, shortly after the book's arrival, show that this assumption is not completely unjustified. On June 25, for example, Yuriko wrote: "...Even though I know no one will see this letter but you, I just can't write 'I kiss you on your left temple' *like Knipper did*, I just can't do it for



some reason” (Kurosawa 2008:440, my emphasis). Comparing herself to Chekhov’s wife, Yuriko in a very natural way ascribes the role of Chekhov to Yoshiko. And yet, it is not only the content but also the linguistic features of the letters (e.g., the usage of second person pronouns) that give evidence that Yoshiko was not reluctant to perform the husband’s role.

Another motivating force of Yoshiko’s first translation was the urge to transplant into the Japanese cultural-linguistic space the Russian way of feeling, or rather “talking about feelings,” i.e., Russian culture-specific communication patterns. According to the translator’s preface, an introductory note by Yoshiko in the first translation (of 1928), one motivation for translating Chekhov’s letters was that she was deeply impressed by the letters’ “richness, gracefulness, depth and the power of expression, the complexity of nuances, the beauty of melody.” In the following lines of her preface, Yoshiko characterizes Japanese as “very poor language when it comes to the expressions of feelings” (Yuasa 1928: 1–3).

In her monograph *Semantic, Culture and Cognition: Universal Human Concepts in Culture-Specific Configurations*, Anna Wierzbicka argues that there are four fundamental themes that shape the semantic universe of the Russian language: 1) Emotionality — “the tremendous stress on emotions and their free expression”; 2) Irrationality/non-rationality — “the stress on limitations of logical thinking, human knowledge and understanding”; 3) Non-agentivity — “the lack of emphasis on the individual as an autonomous “achiever” and controller of events”; 4) Moral passion — “the stress on the moral dimension of human life, the tendency to make absolute moral judgments.” She also claims that the Russian language developed specific linguistic devices for reflecting these four themes (Wierzbicka 1992: 397). Indeed, Chekhov’s letters to his wife reveal to a remarkable degree the presence of linguistic devices illustrating the first and fourth semantic themes: a wealth of active emotion verbs and “dative plus predicative” constructions referring to passive involuntary emotions, a high diversity of personal names addressed to the same person, and, finally, the frequent use of words that express absolute moral condemnation or absolute moral enthusiasm. These devices are thought to be “typically Russian” and as such constitute a problem for any translator.

The repertoire of devices in Japanese to express one’s feelings is much more limited. Yoshiko’s first translation, with its stress on the free expression of emotions, painstakingly introduces the reader to the first and the fourth semantic themes of the Russian language. For example, Yoshiko attempts to transfer the style of interpersonal relations which then prevailed in Russian society by preserving in the target text diminutive pet names, such as *Olka*, *Antonchik*, and *Masha*, which have no Japanese equivalent. As to the evaluative words used by Chekhov to address his wife, these are not only translated but also transcribed. Sometimes

she exploits *katakana* (Japanese phonetic script, then used mostly in reference to foreign terms) to insert Russian words into the Japanese text (Example 1); at other times she applies *rubi* characters, which are usually used as a pronunciation guide for relatively obscure characters, to render a Russian term (Example 2).

Example 1

**Russian:**

*A to chto ty zdorova i vesela, **dusiâ mo iâ**, iâ ochen' rad.*

And this that you are well and cheerful, **my dear**, I am very glad.\*

(Chekhov 1924: 138)

**Japanese:**

*daga omae ga tassha de genki deiru koto ha, **dousha-maya**, watashi ha taihen ure-shii.*

So, that you are well and in a good mood, **my dear** [transcription of Russian expression in *Katakana*, the Japanese syllabic alphabet], I am extremely glad.

(Chehofu 1928: 204)

**English:**

I am very glad that you are well and in good spirits, **my darling**. (Chekhov 1926: 115)

Example 2

**Russian:**

*Milaîa maîa Ol iâ, ne lenis', **angel moi**, pishi svoemu stariku pochashche*

My dear Olya, don't be lazy, **my angel**, write to [your] old man a little more often.

(Chekhov 1924: 76)

**Japanese:**

*kawaii watashi no ôriya, namakete ha ikenai, **watashi no tenshi** [accompanied by *rubi* characters as a pronunciation guide for the original Russian term, i.e., "angeru moi"], omae no rôjin ni tabitabi tegami wo okure.*

Dear my Oriya, you can't be lazy, **my angel**, to your old man many times letters send.

(Chehofu 1928: 131)

**English:**

My sweet Olya, don't be lazy, **my angel**, write a little oftener to your old man.

(Chekhov 1926: 58)

She also tries to transfer the syntax of Russian indefinite-personal sentences and reflexive constructions, i.e., non-agentive features, into the target text, even in cases when it appears to be unnatural for the target language and may obscure the intended meaning (Examples 3 and 4).

## Example 3

**Russian:***Chto by tebe ne govorili, chto by tebe ne kazalos', ty molchi i molchi*

Whatever to you [they] have been saying, whatever to you [it] seems, you be silent and be silent.

(Chekhov 1924: 128)

**Japanese:***nani wo omae ni iou tomo, nani to omae ni mieyō tomo, omae ha damatte oide, damatte oide*

Whatever to you [someone] will possibly say, whatever to you [it] will look like, you be silent, be silent.

(Chehofu 1928, 197)

**English:**

**Whatever is said to you, whatever you fancy, you hold your tongue.**(Chekhov 1926, 106)

## Example 4

**Russian:***Moï vishnëvyi sad budet v trëkh aktakh. Tak mne kazhetsiâ., a vprochem, okonchatel'no eshchë ne reshil.*

My cherry orchard will be in three acts. **So it seems to me**, however, <I> finally yet have not decide.

(Chekhov 1924, 279)

**Japanese:***watashi no sakura no sono ha sanmaku ni naru darō. watashi ni ha sō omowareru. mottomo kettei teki ni ha mada kimaranai.*

My cherry orchard three acts will be. **To me it like that seems.** More definitely yet is did not decided.]

(Chehofu 1928, 287)

**English:**

My “Cherry Orchard” will be in three acts. **So I think**, however I have decided nothing finally yet. (Chekhov 1926, 245)

In her first translation, Yuasa Yoshiko followed her teacher Nobori Shomu, who adopted the strategy of “translating for the sake of translating” and criticized translations that were “too free and easygoing” and “concentrated only on how to convey the atmosphere and the melody of the original writing, while neglecting the formal characteristics of the original text” (Nobori 1953: 38).

Trying somehow to maintain a balance between emphasis on the atmosphere of the original and emphasis on the formal characteristics of the source text, Yuasa Yoshiko managed to complete her first, obviously foreignizing, translation that,

although being a reflection of the general tendency to put emphasis on the content and wording of the source text (Furuno 2002: 319), reflected, in a way, her own conflicting identities that were “foreign” to the time. However, later in life she seemed dissatisfied with her text and produced two revised versions of it based on rather different considerations.

### Translating cultural context

Yoshiko’s first revision of Chekhov’s letters took place in 1939–1940. During the decade that had elapsed since the publication of her first translation, Yoshiko had been through many experiences. From 1927 to 1930, she studied in the USSR and travelled in Europe, sponsored financially by her father. In 1932, two years after her return to Japan, her relationship with Chujo Yuriko came to an end and in the following year Yoshiko was imprisoned for about seven months for having taken part in a fund-raising campaign for the Japan Communist Party.

Drastic changes had occurred in the wider context as well. Beginning in 1931 Japan was involved in the Second Sino-Japanese war and as of 1938 was engaged in serious battles with Soviet troops on the Soviet-Japanese border. The social situation in Japan also worsened. It was a difficult time for intellectuals, when, according to Tsurumi Shunsuke, “even the curling of one’s hair with electrical curlers was thought to be anti-national and against the national structure” (Tsurumi 1986: 31).

As for Yuasa’s professional career, two translations by her appeared serially in periodicals in 1931–1932, and in the years between 1934 and 1942 she issued nine additional translations in book form. By this time she had worked with more than five publishers and, like most of her colleagues, served both as a translator and an expert consultant in terms of choosing texts and authors for translation. It seems that during the late 1930s and early 1940s she put special emphasis on non-fictional biographical literature. A translation of excerpts from Gorky’s diary was published in 1937; at the turn of the decade (1939–1940), Yuasa issued the revised version of Chekhov’s letters to his wife; and in 1941 the Chikuma Shobo publishing company released the Chekhov-Gorky correspondence in one volume.

Yuasa’s revision of Chekhov’s letters, although partly preserving the features of the earlier translation, such as the use of diminutive names and nicknames, is for the most part a very different text. In an attempt to make her translation more comprehensible and approachable to the reading public in a nationalistic atmosphere hostile to things foreign, Yuasa provided the translated text with a commentary and introduced some corrections to the syntax, grammar and wording of the previous version. For example, Yoshiko changed the title from the lexically dense and phonetically complicated, *Tsuma ni okutta Chehofu shokanshu* [Letters

that Chekhov sent to his wife], to the much more flowing and familiar *Tsuma e no tegami* [Letters to [his] wife]. She also reduced the presence of Russian borrowings and transliterations. In certain cases she omitted *rubi* and occasionally replaced the “borrowed” unnatural Russian syntax with standard Japanese constructions (Examples 5 and 6).

Example 5

**Russian:**

*Milaia moia, chasa cherez dva ia uezhaïu na sever, v Rossiïu.*

Dear my, in about two hours I depart to north, to Russia.

(Chekhov 1924: 98)

**Japanese:**

(1928) *mîraya maya, nijikan bakari tatsu to watashi ha kita no hō he, roshia he shuppatsu suru.*

[Dear my [transcription of Russian expression], about two hours will pass, and then I to north direction, to Russia will depart.

(Chehofu 1928: 164)

(1939) *kawaii watashi no hito yo nijikan bakari tatsu to watashi ha kita no hō he, roshia he shuppatsu suru.*

Dear my person!, about two hours will pass, and then I to north direction, to Russia will depart.

(Chehofu 1939: 186)

**English:**

My dear, within two hours I am setting off for the North to Russia. (Chekhov 1926: 79)

Example 6

**Russian:**

*Tebia khvalili v gazetakh, znachit ty ne pereborshchila, igrala horosho.*

[They] Praised you in newspapers, it means you did not overdo, [you] performed well.

(Chekhov 1924: 279)

**Japanese**

(1928) *shinbun de ha omae wo hometa. omae ga enjirisugizu, yoku enjitta toiu koto ni naru.*

In newspapers [someone] you OBJ praised. You without overdoing perfomed well, that's what it means.

(Chehofu 1928: 287)

(1940) *omae ha shinbun de homeraretane. tsumari omae ha do wo sugosazu, yoku enjitta toiu wakeda.*

**You in newspapers were praised!** In short, you without going too far performed well, that's the meaning.  
(Chehofu 1940: 89)

#### English

**You were praised in the newspapers**, which means that you did not overdo it but acted well. (Chekhov 1926: 245)

On the other hand, there is a greater sensitivity to Russian culture in the revised version, arguably a result of the research she had undertaken during her stay in the Soviet Union. This research afforded Yoshiko the chance to correct discrepancies and translation errors as well as expand the number of notes. Here, Yoshiko tried to convey not only the semantic and pragmatic meanings of the original but also its cultural specifics. She discusses most of these issues in the translator's afterword, included in the first volume of the revised translation of the letters:

I added the footnotes that were not included in the original text to be helpful for the readers who want to have a better understanding. I did it because ... it is difficult, especially for the Japanese reader, to fully understand the original only with the footnotes provided by the editor ... This book provides an interesting and intimate reading for those who love Chekhov's writings, while for scholars it provides appropriate research material — a very special record of a writer's private life. And yet, since this book contains, here and there, remarks and suggestions (although short, but very deep) on Chekhov's play, it may be thought-provoking for those readers who are engaged in theatrical activity. (Yuasa 1939: 329)

Textual characteristics of Yoshiko's re-translation of Chekhov's letters as well as the choice of publisher (according to the Sogensha Publishers' webpage, it focused at the time on works by the literary establishment and positioned itself as "a publisher of high quality literature") reveal that in 1939 Yoshiko, as a professional translator, felt the need to create "educational" translations through which intelligent Japanese readers could feel the scent of foreignness embodied in the text and at the same time comprehend more about Russian culture in general.

### Translating marriage

From 1943 to 1950 Yoshiko did not publish any translations. In 1950, a new period in her professional career began with translations of two of Chekhov's plays, *Three Sisters* and *Cherry Orchard*. This period proved to be the most fruitful one in Yoshiko's professional life. She worked enthusiastically, publishing two or three translations per year. During this period, Japan was experiencing a rapid economic recovery, leading up to what would come to be known as Japan's post-war

economic miracle. Yet interest in Soviet culture and pre-Revolutionary Russian literature among intellectuals also ran high. Public interest in Russian culture appeared partly as a reaction to the overwhelming influence of the United States. For, although the American occupation ended in 1952, anti-Americanism (from the left and right alike) continued to be evident.

It might be interesting to speculate on whether Yoshiko's new preference for Japanese traditional clothes reflected an ideology of anti-Americanism or rather her frank acknowledgment that "a Japanese woman with her traditional proportions of so called 'long trunk short legs' looks bad indeed when wearing slacks" (Yuasa 1973: 53). Whatever the reason may be, from around 1955 Yoshiko reversed her previous decision, made in 1927, to wear only western clothes. From this point on, she began to wear Japanese traditional clothes again, until finally, ten years later, she, "ended up wearing...only Japanese traditional dress" (Yuasa 1973: 53).

In recent studies of material culture, dress is interpreted as a significant identity marker. However, in Margaret Maynard's words, clothes "are central to identity but not in a deterministic way" (Maynard 2004: 5). And so Yoshiko's changing attitudes toward clothes may be viewed as a signal of an identity shift, which was also reflected in other domains. It is more than a coincidence, perhaps, that Yoshiko's initial decision to wear western clothes was made in 1927, the year she translated Chekhov's letters for the first time, while her re-adoption of traditional Japanese dress coincides with the publication (in 1955) of the third and final retranslation of the book.

Times had obviously changed, and post-war Japan was significantly different from pre-war Japan not only in socio-economic and political terms but also in terms of the Japanese language, which had undergone noticeable changes as a result of reforms that took place between 1946 and 1958. When comparing Yoshiko's final version of Chekhov's letters to his wife to the previous two, the most striking difference among them is visual. First, the characters in the 1955 text appear in simplified shapes and their number is reduced. It makes the task of reading much easier. There is a very high percentage of *hiragana* in the text. *Rubi* in most cases is used not for the transcription of foreign words but instead as a pronunciation guide for the characters. The explanatory notes that in previous translations had been inserted into the main text are removed. Moreover, not only the place but also the content of the footnotes is changed. A comparison of the footnote about the Russian word *pirog* (referring to a traditional Russian dish) reveals a change in the translator's orientation — from a source culture/text-oriented translation to a target culture/text-oriented one.

In the first translation, a term from the source culture (*pirog*) is explained through another term from the source culture (*piroshika*, or 'piroshki'), and a cultural reference to the Russian tradition of celebrating holidays is also provided

— here the translator tries to bring the reader closer to “the cultural other.” In the second translation, the source cultural term is explained by a term borrowed from a more familiar third culture (i.e., a culture which is neither source nor target) — here *pirog* is referred to as ‘pie’, although the cultural reference to the traditional Russian holiday still remains in the text. However, in the last translation, the cultural reference to Christmas is replaced by a cultural reference to traditional *o-shogatsu* (New Year’s Eve) food from the target culture, namely *o-sekihan* (rice boiled together with red beans). Here the translator tries to bring “the cultural other” closer to the target reader.

Another prominent change in the 1955 translation involves Yoshiko’s use of the pronoun *kimi*, written in the *hiragana* script, instead of *omae*, which she used in the 1928 and 1940 translations to replace the Russian pronoun *ty*, indicating an intimate or familiar relationship between the speaking persons. The use of kinship terms in the Japanese language depends on a much wider context and is determined by the entire communicative situation. According to the *Kojien Dictionary*, *omae* is a word used by men to address an inferior. In the beginning of the twentieth century, Japanese men usually addressed their wives by *omae* or *omae-san* in speech and in letters. *Kimi* hints at a higher level of equality since this word can be used by men as well as women, and in ancient times this term was used by an inferior man to address a superior woman. The combination of the neutral Chinese character *watashi* (instead of *ore* or *boku*), which Yoshiko uses to translate Chekhov’s *ya*, or ‘I’, and *kimi* (instead of *omae* and *omae-san*), which she uses as a translation of *ty*, suggests a more equal relationship, as revealed through the letters.

One year before the third version appeared in print, Yoshiko took part in a public discussion on “Chekhov in Japan,” which was published in August 1954 in *Shin Nihon Bungaku*. The discussion included many topics. Yoshiko, who at the time was less sceptical about woman/man relationships and was more concerned with the inequalities of traditional marriage and society, spoke mostly about the relationship between Chekhov and Avilova, about Chekhov’s sudden marriage to Olga Knipper, about his view of married life and about his antipathy toward philistinism.<sup>8</sup> While discussing “Chekhov’s attitude toward women,” she said, reacting to someone’s comment: “He does not see woman as high and superior and man as low and inferior. He sees them as equals” (Zadankai 1954: 109).

I believe that the gender equality between the spouses was the most important message Yoshiko tried to convey in her third translation. The book was published by Iwanami Shoten in paperback pocket format, thus targeting a very large readership. This time the translation was perceived by the translator as a means of communicating with her readers as potential receivers of her ideas, concepts and attitudes. In order to achieve this commonality of ideas with her readership, Yuasa



Yoshiko needed to make the text more fluent, more easy-to-read and less foreign. Thus, the approach to the text she practiced while working on the final revision was much more reader-oriented, much more ‘domesticating’ than the previous translations.

## Conclusion

There can be little doubt that the specific circumstances under which a translator lives and works affect what is produced. Yuasa Yoshiko’s case study illustrates how the biography of the translator, intertwined with a wide range of different factors, creates an influential context, a conceptual framework for the translator to understand her own professional task at any given time. As Yoshiko’s three translations of Chekhov’s letters exemplify, the same text(s) translated at different stages of a translator’s life may appear very different. And the differences found in each translation, then, are the textual manifestations of the translator’s autobiographical impulses, traces of her lived life.

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## Notes

\* All the translations are mine unless otherwise indicated (EB).

1. Recent biographical works include: Setouchi Jakucho, *Kokou no hito* (Chikumashobo, 1997; Sawabe Hitomi’s *Yuriko, dasuvidaniya: Yuasa Yoshiko no seishun* (Bungei Shunshu, 1990)
2. The evidence supporting this assumption for Yuasa Yoshiko’s case can be found, for example, in Sawabe 1990: 91, Terasaki 2004: 235–6 and Setouchi 1997: 36.
3. In pre-war Japan there were generally two patterns of traditional adoption: the adoption of children in order to secure the succession of family names; and the offering of children for adoption due to economic hardship faced by the biological parents. Thus, a situation in which the child was put forward for adoption even when her or his parents were still alive was not unusual (International Social Service Japan 2007, online resource).

4. For instance, Sawabe reports on Yoshiko being sexually harassed by her adoptive father (Sawabe 1990: 97).
5. A year later, this psychological detachment was followed by a physical one: Yoshiko fled to Tokyo, where she lived and worked as Inoue Yoshiko until 1922. During this time, she was looking for answers to the basic questions of “Who am I?” and “What do I do?”. Significant for that process is the fact that Yoshiko’s writings that appeared in print between 1912 and 1922 (essays, translations and private letters) were published under several different names, e.g., Yuasa Akiko, Inoue Yoshiko and Tamura Toshiko. This is a fine illustration of the lack of the consistency in both her personal and professional identities. In 1922, following her mother’s death, she was disowned by her adoptive family and received her original family name back.
6. See for example the letter she wrote to Chujo Yuriko when Yuriko was an editor at *Aikoku Fujin Kikanshi* (Journal of the Patriotic Women’s Association): “My present work is more like a game. There is no way for me to be enthusiastic about such a thing ... I wish I could do something that would make me feel more serious, more earnest. If I could choose, it would be something like publishing [business]” (Kurosawa 2008: 273).
7. The choice of the text was made by Yoshiko herself. In April 1925, the book arrived from Harbin. Two months later, Yoshiko began to work on it. In June 1926, she met frequently with Akiba Toshihiko, a translator working with Shincho Publishers. Akiba introduced Yuasa to the publisher and finally, in November 1926, the decision was made to publish her translation. In April 1927, Yuasa completed the first draft, and in January 1928, the translation was published by Shincho Publishers as the tenth volume of the *Complete Works of Chekhov*.
8. In 1956 Yuasa translated Samuil Marshak’s play *Afraid of Troubles — Cannot Have Luck*, which represents marriage as an equal union of hearts. Later, in 1962, she developed this theme in her essay “On Marriage”: “I never had the experience of marriage because the temper of the time was bad. If I’d been born half a century later, I probably would have married and given birth to children. I think I really have all the qualifications of a woman of family, but at the same time I have my own pride as a human being and that is why, ultimately, I could not find a partner for marriage in Japan of half a century ago” (Yuasa 1973: 88).

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# Conference interpreters and their perception of culture

## From the narratives of Japanese pioneers

Kumiko Torikai

This paper seeks to explore the perception of culture held by conference and diplomatic interpreters in post-WWII Japan. Based on oral history research with five Japanese pioneers, interpreters' perceptions about culture and cultural barriers in communication are studied and then compared with their role perceptions and their actual practice. Although the pioneering conference interpreters perceived their role as more or less invisible, showing little interest in the discussion of culture and cultural mediation, their narratives in life-story interviews demonstrate that they were essential participants in intercultural communication, bridging cultural barriers. Without being aware of their role as cultural mediators, the five interpreters were actively and autonomously involved in intercultural communication as indispensable co-participants.

**Keywords:** life-story interviews, post-WWII Japan, perception of culture, cultural mediation, intercultural communication

### Introduction

This study seeks to explore the perception of culture held by conference and diplomatic interpreters in Japan. Oral history research conducted with five Japanese interpreters illustrated an interesting dimension of interpreters' perception about culture and cultural barriers in communication (Torikai 2009). For one thing, the five interpreters interviewed did not respond enthusiastically when asked how they learned cultural literacy and how they tackled cultural differences in interpreting, while they were quite eager and eloquent in their discussion of language and language learning. Four of them were totally indifferent to the discussion of culture, and one was strongly opposed to the notion of cultural mediation, which

was surprising since interpreters are supposed to be not only bilingual but bicultural as well (see, for example, Snell-Hornby 1988).

This article examines this seemingly puzzling phenomenon in relation to the interpreters' perception of their role, analyzing the life-story interviews of conference interpreters who devoted their careers to Japan's international relations following World War II.

## Oral history

Oral history, which uses life-story interviews as raw material, is built around people. It "thrusts life into history itself and widens its scope to the historical dimension in social analysis," bringing together sociology and history (Thompson 1978/2000: 73–74). It "begins in the orality of the narrator but is directed towards (and concluded by) the written text" (Alessandro Portelli 1997: 5), using the life experience of different kinds of people, which allows "the original multiplicity of standpoints to be recreated, resulting in more realistic reconstruction of the past" (Thompson 2000: 5–6).

The life-story interviews conducted in the present study focused primarily on three points:

1. How did the pioneer conference interpreters acquire the linguistic, communicative and cultural competence needed for interpreting between Japanese and English?
2. What specific efforts were exerted in trying to bridge the gap between these two different languages and cultures?
3. How did the interpreters perceive their roles: as "invisible conduits" or "cultural mediators"?

Since the overall purpose of the interviews was to elicit the life stories of the interpreters while retaining a semi-structured format to ensure that all the key questions were covered, the interviews became close to free-flowing if not quite totally free as in a non-directive interview.

Five diplomatic/conference interpreters were interviewed, and their life stories tape-recorded, transcribed and analyzed. They are Nishiyama Sen, Sohma Yukika, Muramatsu Masumi, Kunihiro Masao and Komatsu Tatsuya,<sup>1</sup> all prominent figures representing the first generation of simultaneous interpreters in Japan.<sup>2</sup>

Nishiyama Sen was born in 1911, in Utah, USA, to Japanese parents. He received his schooling in America and earned a master's degree in electrical engineering. Returning to Japan shortly before the war, he started to work at

Electrotechnical Laboratory, the Ministry of Communications, which led him to do interpreting work at the General Headquarters of the Allied Occupation Forces. He was ultimately employed at the U.S. Embassy, where he served as an official interpreter for U.S. ambassadors to Japan, among them Edwin O. Reischauer. When the 1969 Apollo moon landing was broadcast, he performed simultaneous interpreting on the NHK nationwide TV network, which made him a national figure. People still call him “the Apollo simultaneous interpreter.” He passed away in 2007 at the age of 95.

**Sohma Yukika** was born in January 1912, in Tokyo. Her father, Ozaki Gakudo Yukio, is regarded as the “father of constitutional government” in Japan. As her mother, Theodora, was half British, Sohma was raised to be bilingual. This unique upbringing and her familiarity with politics due to her father’s profession led her to interpret for various political leaders, including Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke.

For many years she was president of the *Nan-min wo Tasukeru Kai* (AAR = Association for Aid and Relief, Japan), which she established in 1979 to help refugees. She passed away in 2008 at the age of 96.

**Muramatsu Masumi** was born in July 1930, in Tokyo. He became a typist at the General Headquarters of the Occupation Forces before working for the U.S. Department of State as an escort interpreter for Japan’s productivity missions. After working in the U.S. for over a decade, he came back to Japan and founded Simul International with his colleagues from the State Department. He was the chief interpreter for almost all of the summit meetings, along with other conferences and diplomatic negotiations, and is widely known as “Mr. Simultaneous Interpreter.” He continued to be active lecturing until suffering a stroke in 2004.

**Kunihiro Masao**, dubbed the “God of Simultaneous Interpreting,” was born in Tokyo, August 1930. He studied cultural anthropology at the University of Hawaii, taught at universities in Japan, and is a distinguished visiting professor at the University of Edinburgh. He was Prime Minister Miki’s official aide and advisor, and in 1989, was elected a member of the House of Councilors in the Diet. He has published more than one hundred books on topics ranging from foreign relations to English language education, and has translated numerous books, from Edward T. Hall’s *The Silent Language* to David Crystal’s *English as a Global Language*.

**Komatsu Tatsuya** was born in 1934, in Nagoya. His initial attempt at interpreting was at the annual Hiroshima Conference against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs while he was studying English at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. After working for the U.S. Department of State as an interpreter for productivity study teams, he returned to Japan to help establish Simul International. Drawing on his many years of experience as a conference and diplomatic interpreter, he continues to teach and write on interpreting.

Nishiyama Sen and Sohma Yukika were both brought up as bilinguals, but in very different environments. Nishiyama went to school in the U.S. but spoke only Japanese with his parents, while Sohma was raised bilingually in monolingual Japan, speaking Japanese with her statesman father and English with her half-British mother. The other three — Muramatsu Masumi, Kunihiro Masao and Komatsu Tatsuya — were all born and raised in Japan, with Muramatsu and Kunihiro learning English during the war, when it was deemed a hostile language, while the younger Komatsu learned English after the war, when suddenly an English-study craze swept through the country.

Culturally, Nishiyama might be the only one who can be considered truly bi-cultural, having lived and grown up in the U.S. with his Japanese parents, who made a point of maintaining their Japanese identity. Sohma is possibly an ambivalent figure, born and educated in the Japanese establishment but very much aware of her quarter-British identity, often rejecting traditional Japanese values. Among the three who had a fundamentally Japanese upbringing, Kunihiro encountered the cultural “other” relatively early as a teenager, meeting a prisoner of war from Scotland, and later studying in Hawaii as a university student.

### Interpreters’ reaction to culture

The responses given (or not given) by the five interpreters to the questions regarding cultural matters contradict a now widely-held view that interpreting is an act of intercultural communication, not merely the transfer of linguistic codes. As early as 1988, Mary Snell-Hornby treated translation as a “cross-cultural event” and pointed out that a translator must be not only proficient in two languages but also at home in two cultures so as to be both “bilingual and bicultural” (42).

Umberto Eco proposes the notion of “translation as negotiation” (2004: 89, 100) in discussing the choice between the need to understand the linguistic and cultural universe of the source text and to transform the original by adapting it to the target cultural and linguistic universe. Although Eco was referring to written translation, the issue is certainly relevant to spoken or signed language interpreting, as the interpreter is a communication “specialist in negotiating understanding between cultures” (David Katan 1999/2004: 18).

Nevertheless, not one subject in the study took the initiative to discuss negotiating culture in interpreting — not even Kunihiro, who introduced Hall to Japan by translating his seminal work *The Silent Language* (1959, translated into Japanese in 1966) and who translated the term “intercultural communication” into Japanese.<sup>3</sup> Komatsu Tatsuya was the only person who reacted to the question of

culture, but he was almost antagonistic toward the notion of cultural mediation. He used the term “cultural clarifier” in business interpreting and stated explicitly that he regarded it as going beyond the role of the interpreter.

When asked how she bridged the gap between two different cultures and whether she experienced any difficulty in doing so, Sohma flatly denied that she had experienced any difficulty in filling cultural gaps since she had grown up in an environment where she “did not feel the difference between Japanese and English.” Likewise, Nishiyama had little to say about culture except that he had learned it from living in two cultures, which is in stark contrast to the lengthy account he gave of his learning two languages. When asked how he acquired cultural literacy, Nishiyama, like Sohma, responded that since he had lived in both societies, becoming “bicultural sort of came just by experience.” He did add, however, that he learned much about Japanese culture from his colleagues who used to take him out for walks during the lunch break to “explain things like Japanese legends and society.”

In addition, Nishiyama recounted being taught the Japanese way of behaving in a Japanese workplace. When second generation Japanese-American Nishiyama came to Japan shortly before WWII with a degree in electrical engineering, he was hired by Electrotechnical Laboratory of the Ministry of Communications and was first assigned to the library to study written Japanese. After a few months, Nishiyama started to feel uneasy and asked one of his colleagues, “I am very worried, you know. I feel guilty receiving a salary for doing something like this.” And the reply was, “Don’t worry. Just do whatever you are told to do. That’s the Japanese way.” Although he didn’t perceive it as such, this is clearly an issue of culture, with values, assumptions and beliefs dictating an individual’s decision regarding what to do and what not to do.

When asked how he reconciled cultural differences or overcame cultural barriers in interpreting, Nishiyama simply answered, “Well, I cannot say I recall such an incident. Fortunately, I did not encounter such difficult situations” and although he admitted to several occasions when he had misinterpreted in this respect, he was not able to come up with specific examples. One plausible reason for the interpreters’ blasé attitude toward the cultural aspects of interpreting is that the meaning of “culture” in the interview questions was too broad. As Komatsu commented in the interview, they might have felt culture was something “elusive” — not specific enough to discuss. This is understandable, for once one begins to ponder a definition and to consider what it implies, culture becomes “a prodigious and commanding notion” (Samovar, Porter and Jain 1981:24). Therefore, in the following section we will study the concept more closely before discussing the cultural issues and perceptions involved in interpreting.



## What is culture?

American anthropologists Alfred Louis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952) compiled a list of 164 definitions of culture. It is no exaggeration to say that the definition of culture itself has long been a topic for academic debates. One of the oldest definitions was offered by the English anthropologist Edward Barnett Tylor in 1871: “Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” Since then, multiple definitions have appeared. For example, Fons Trompenaars (1997) described culture as consisting of three layers: the outer layer of artifacts and products, the middle layer of norms and values, and basic assumptions at the core. Geert Hofstede (1991) used the metaphor of the “skin of an onion” to demonstrate the superficial and deeper layers of culture, with values at the center. Edward T. Hall (1952) introduced “The Iceberg Theory,” explaining that the most important part of culture is hidden and what can be seen is just the tip of the iceberg. Hall (1982) later presented an extended model of a “Triad of Culture,” dividing culture into technical, formal and informal, or out-of awareness, culture. In Japan, the cultural anthropologist Ishida Ei-ichiro (1966) considered culture as a system consisting of cultural elements grouped broadly as language, values, society and technology, and surrounded by nature.

In translation studies, Snell-Hornby draws on Dell Hymes (1964) and defines culture in the anthropological sense as “all socially conditioned aspects of human life” (1988: 39). Quoting Frantz Fanon’s words “To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture,” Anuradha Dingwaney explains that “language cannot be isolated from the ‘world’ or ‘culture’ within which it is embedded and which it, thus, expresses” (1995: 3). As such, Dingwaney acknowledges the need for the translator to attend to the context (“a world, a culture”), and maintains that it is “entirely appropriate that translation theory and practice has, in recent years, turned to both ‘source’ and ‘target’ cultures as something to be studied” (1995: 3).

From a postcolonial perspective, Homi Bhabha warns of “the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures” (emphasis in original) and proposes instead an “*international culture*” based on the “inscription and articulation of culture’s *hybridity*.” This “*inter*” is important, because “it is the ‘*inter*’ — the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space — that carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (1994: 38). The *in-between* space is what Bhabha terms a Third Space, which has led scholars in different disciplines to explore the third space approach, despite its ambivalent and complex nature, in language teaching and intercultural communication studies (Michael Kelly 2006: 31–34). Claire Kramsch (2005), for instance, talks about the “cultural third space” in her discussion of cultural literacy.

One feature that cannot be overlooked in discussing the definition of culture is that culture is communication (Hall 1959/1973:97), and as such, “what we talk about and how we talk about it is for the most part determined by the culture in which we have lived” (Samovar et al. 1981:25). Taking this view of culture, it is possible to speculate that the pioneer interpreters were seemingly indifferent to culture because the concept of cultural differences or cultural barriers was subsumed under language and communication. It might be surmised that when the subjects talked about language and communication, culture was already a part of it, without being explicitly mentioned, or it could be that for interpreters, culture is so much a part of their life that it cannot be treated as a separate issue. Cecilia Wadensjö (1998), for one, contends that the very question of culture, when separated from language issues, represents a monologic, talk-as-text view of interpreting. It may well be, then, that without even realizing it, the five interpreters took a dialogic view of language and culture in the Bakhtinian sense (Bakhtin 1981) and treated culture not separately but as a part of the communicative interactions taking place in interpreting practice. After all, language is “the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways” (Claire Kramsch 1998:3).

On the multicultural frontier, where many interpreters work today, the relationship between language and culture carries even greater weight, and the work of interpreting has to be revisited beyond the linguistic sphere, or even beyond Dell Hymes’s “communicative competence” (1972), placing it in a wider context of culture. And “culture” here is not confined to what Hirsch (1987) calls “cultural literacy” but can be described with the concept of “intercultural competence,” advocated by Michael Byram (2003), and “transcultural perspectives,” proposed by Kramsch (2005).

“Intercultural competence” is defined by Byram et al. as consisting of the following components:

1. *Intercultural attitudes (savoir être)*: curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own.
2. *Knowledge (savoirs)*: of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor’s country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction.
3. *Skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre)*: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and to relate it to documents or events from one’s own.
4. *Skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre/faire)*: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and to apply knowledge,

attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.

5. *Critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager)*: an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries. (Byram et al. 2001: 5–7)

Not surprisingly, all five subjects in the present study are equipped with these five components of intercultural competence. The pioneers are open and inquisitive, are well versed in the two cultures, exhibit admirable interpreting skills and an ability to relate, to discover and interact, as well as a critical cultural awareness. In sum, it can be safely assessed that they are truly intercultural as professionals and mediators.

In trying to explain the need for “transcultural perspectives,” Kramsch defines modern society in three phases, (1) a bureaucratic society, (2) an entrepreneurial society, and (3) a global networked society (2005: 19–31). In a bureaucratic society, texts and authors are respected, and the efforts to discern authors' intentions are valued. Literacy is seen as the internalization of history, the memory of a tradition to be passed on from one generation to the next, and translation is considered the search for equivalence between two different languages.

An entrepreneurial society is oriented toward the international market, where tensions between national and international interests take place in the technological, economic and cultural areas. In such a society, language is seen as interpersonal communication, as information to be exchanged in cross-cultural encounters between individuals, and literacy is defined as “a set of cognitive and social skills which operate in the expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning between two interlocutors or between a text and its readers” (Kramsch 2005: 21). While cultural literacy is the internalization of native speakers' knowledge, “intercultural literacy is the ability to make comparisons between the native and the foreign culture, to seek not only to identify differences, but to examine them critically” (2005: 21).

Kramsch explains that neither mode would be adequate in the global networked society, where “symbolic, historical, cultural and ideological values” are assuming more importance (2005: 23). In such a global society, intercultural literacy has to be understood in different ways, with transcultural perspectives focusing on relativizing and contextualizing different people's perceptions of history, including the understanding of how the connotations of words reflect the historical conditions in which they were used. To achieve this, it is necessary to find a “cultural third space,” outside the domination of markets and national/ethnic communities.

While the evidence offered by the pioneer interpreters is basically consonant with what Kramsch calls the “bureaucratic mode,” a great many of their stories reflect interpreting in an “entrepreneurial society,” at times revealing a transcultural view of global networked society. In the following section, we will examine the meaning of culture and its relevance to interpreting more closely and then analyze the life-story interviews of the five interpreters.

## Narratives of the interpreters

In spite of their reluctance to talk about culture per se, the pioneers’ life stories are rich with cultural experiences. Many of the stories told were in fact representations of culture, as in the following case when Nishiyama was unable to detect the anger contained in a politician’s statement vis-à-vis his American counterpart.

During one of the discussion sessions at the first U.S.-Japan Ministerial Meeting on Trade and Economic Affairs held in Hakone, November 1961, Kono Ichiro, the then-Minister of Agriculture, made quite an aggressive statement, almost an ultimatum, to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Freeman. It was virtually *tanka wo kiru*, a Japanese expression meaning to speak out with angry determination, ready to fight. In Nishiyama’s recollection, what Kono said indeed amounted to *tanka wo kiru* although he did not detect it at the time:

The topic, as I remember, was import and export of agricultural products. Up until that point, the Minister made jokes which left Secretary Freeman puzzled and the atmosphere was amicable. I interpreted Kono’s words into English using slang, to which the U.S. Secretary responded with big gestures, and the Minister of Agriculture seemed quite satisfied. This particular statement came up in the middle of such a friendly situation, and I simply interpreted Mr. Kono’s ‘*tanka*’ in ordinary English. Thanks to my interpreting, Secretary Freeman had no idea that the Japanese Agriculture Minister had said something aggressive in a ‘*tanka wo kitta*’ [the past tense of *tanka wo kiru*] manner, and gave a straightforward answer. Later, somebody in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said to me, ‘Mr. Kono, at that time, meant to *tanka wo kiru* and so he was somewhat dissatisfied with your interpretation.’ For the first time I realized it was meant to be a ‘*tanka*,’ and at the next meeting, I deeply apologized to Mr. Kono. (Nishiyama 1970:20–21)

Asked about this episode in the interview, Nishiyama replied that he did not recall the details, but that he “summed up in English what Mr. Kono had said.” It was only after the meeting, when others were saying how Kono’s remarks in Japanese were, in effect, *tanka wo kitta* that he realized the Minister had meant his statement to be angry:

- Torikai: So you did not see it as a *tanka wo kiru* at that time?
- Nishiyama: I don't think so. If I did, I would have approached it in that manner. [...] I suppose it was not too clear to me. I believe the subject was regarding an importing issue of some agricultural product.
- Torikai: But if you had realized at that time, the words spoken were actually *tanka*, as an interpreter, what do you think you would have done? Do you think you interpreted it that way even if you thought it might risk offending the American side?
- Nishiyama: It would have been inevitable. The reason is, if that is what the speaker intended, it is not the responsibility of the interpreter even if the listener became offended.
- Torikai: That's for sure.
- Nishiyama: Sometimes, the interpreter is blamed for some talks that did not go well. The responsibility is placed on the interpreter whether he likes it or not. However, I say that it is the speaker who should take the responsibility, not the interpreter.

Nishiyama wrote about this episode in his 1970 book, concluding that what was needed was “*rapport*” between a speaker and his interpreter. However, in order “to understand the feelings of a speaker as if they are your own” (Nishiyama 1970:20–21), the interpreter needs to fully understand the cultural implications embedded in speech acts, and it could just be that for all his proficiency in two languages as a balanced bilingual,<sup>4</sup> Nishiyama, born and brought up in the U.S., did not fully grasp the implicature of the Japanese way of communication. At the same time, this episode represents the close relationship between culture and the interpreter's role.

Muramatsu recounted an anecdote from when he accompanied Ibuka Masaru, one of the founders of Sony, then Tokyo Telecommunications Engineering Corporation, to Silicon Valley, before it was called that. After touring the factory, the owner asked, “So what do you think, Mr. Ibuka? Why don't we form a partnership?” Ibuka, in a typically Japanese way, did not give a definite answer on the spot and replied, “*Yabusaka dewa nai*,” which is not a flat refusal but neither is it an active commitment, leaving some ambiguity. Muramatsu recalls:

When I interpreted this ambiguous expression, with a kind of double negative, I translated it into English literally; ‘I would not be unwilling to consider your proposal.’ Then that man...I still remember clearly...asked me, “What does he mean by that? What does he mean?” There were only three of us at the time, so I replied, “I don't know. That's what he said.” And I had no choice but to tell Mr. Ibuka, “He is saying that he doesn't really understand what you mean.” Mr. Ibuka, then, looked at my face, grinned, and said, “Just tell him *yabusaka dewa nai*.” He probably didn't want to say anything more, I think. So I said, “I repeat. Mr. Ibuka says, I would not be unwilling to consider.” He (the American) shrugged like this.

It was clear that the listener found it hard to understand Ibuka's intention, but in this case, Muramatsu adhered to a foreignizing, source-oriented strategy, keeping the ambiguous statement as ambiguous. This is another example of culture reflected in language and communication. Muramatsu himself made a remark about the American who proposed a business partnership to Ibuka:

Had he read Ruth Benedict<sup>5</sup> or the like, he would have realized, "He is just avoiding giving an immediate answer, but it doesn't mean there is no hope." And he could have said something like, "Thank you. I will get in touch with you by writing." And send him a letter later, or depending on the situation, say "I'll be happy to come to Tokyo to talk further," then who knows, he may have gotten a business deal. He knew too little. Mr. Ibuka used a vague expression, and so I reproduced his intent by interpreting it in a vague way. He [the American] had it coming for not studying Japanese ways. That's what I think.

Among the five, only Kunihiro majored in cultural anthropology. Asked what motivated him to study this particular field, he referred to the multicultural nature of Hawaii:

For one thing, Hawaii is a unique place, as you know. So many different cultures, different races, different ethnic groups, different languages — Japanese is also widely used. It's a place where many differences meet and cross — "heterogeneity." [...] The fact that different cultures coexisted, and furthermore, rather peacefully, without much violence, I think it's a place where they co-existed. Therefore, cultural anthropology, or comparative sociology and the like...I wanted to study these things in connection with Japan.

Although Kunihiro was not overly enthusiastic about answering cultural questions, he summed up his escort interpreting experience of traveling around the United States as something akin to "ethnography of the American society."

The only time Komatsu associated culture with his work was when he talked about interpreting for Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo<sup>6</sup> and Keizo's excessive modesty at a reception of a large international conference:

Komatsu: Obuchi is from the same constituency as Nakasone and Fukuda — Gunma. And so he said, "In Gunma Prefecture, I'm just an old man running a tiny *ramen*<sup>7</sup> place around the corner. Nakasone-san and Fukuda-san are like huge department stores such as Mitsukoshi and Seibu."<sup>8</sup> Belittling himself. I was interpreting this and I thought... I mean, he is the Prime Minister of a country, you see. Being too humble. I had to think what kind of impression people from overseas might receive. I was doing consecutive interpreting then, and I softened the original expression somewhat to a "modest existence" and translated it as "Compared with these two, I am not yet a big shot." This could be a kind of difference in culture.

- Torikai: Right, because this would be accepted favorably in Japan.
- Komatsu: Oh, yes. People would like it here. But you know, I was looking at the audience while I was interpreting, and I noticed people from overseas looked puzzled at times. Their reactions...to a certain degree... That is why gradually I softened the original to alleviate this.

Notwithstanding his comment that this could be “a kind of difference in culture,” Komatsu was doubtful about the issue of culture throughout the interview. For instance, when asked how he became interested in American culture, he made it clear in his response that he was never consciously aware of “culture” or “the study of culture” as such, although he was certainly interested in and learned about specific areas, like American industry and management, politics, or music. He added, “You could sum up and call them ‘culture’ I suppose. Nevertheless, I have never been aware of it as culture. In my opinion, culture is something quite elusive, and it is not always productive to perceive things as ‘culture.’”

Later on, Komatsu revealed why he was so doubtful about culture when he started to talk about what he called “cultural clarifiers.” According to Komatsu, “cultural clarifiers” are business interpreters and cultural consultants combined. Rather than simply acting as interpreters, they give advice to their clients on how to express things and even what to say, and in Komatsu’s view, “This is where the pitfall is, for an interpreter to be stepping deeply into culture, and that’s part of the reason I say that you shouldn’t be too concerned about culture.”

The notion of “cultural clarifiers” as introduced by Komatsu is different from the “cultural interpreter” in health care and school systems in Canada, who “transmit all verbal and non-verbal information in strict confidentiality, while helping each party to understand the values, concepts and cultural practices of the other” (Mesa 2000: 69). Katan views the interpreter’s role as shifting from a discreet black box and a “walking generalist translator of words” to a “cultural mediator,” a visible third party and “a specialist in negotiating between cultures” (2004: 18). The issue of culture and interpreting, therefore, is directly connected to the discussion of the interpreter’s role — a linguistic conduit, a communication facilitator, or a bilingual/bicultural mediator. It would be worthwhile at this point, then, to look into the interpreters’ perception of culture and its possible relationship to their perceived role and their actual practice.

## Cultural awareness and role perception

In their life-story interviews, the five Japanese interpreters presented varied perceptions about culture, not always explicitly but nonetheless detectably. Although

the relevance of the perception of culture to role perception was not clear, cultural elements clearly crept into their interpreting practice, often without being consciously perceived as such, requiring the interpreter to make a decision “here and now.”

The subjects in the study used various metaphors and analogies to describe their perceptions about the interpreter’s role, among them *kurogo* (stage coordinator dressed in black in *kabuki* theater) (Muramatsu and Kunihiro); a “machine” (Komatsu), and a “voice to convey message” (Nishiyama). Sohma reiterated that interpreting was not a profession but a “calling” from God, and her view of ideal interpreting was to “have empathy” with the speaker. To achieve this, she felt that editing the message could be justified. Asked whether or not she added something when interpreting, for example, to make the message sound more natural in English, she readily answered: “Add something, and make the other side understand. That’s interpreting.”

In analyzing the role perception of the interpreters, it will be useful to draw on Erving Goffman’s concept of participation framework (1981:137–145), in which the role or function of all participants in the social gathering is examined in relation to their “participation status.” The word “talk” as used by Goffman is not confined to conversation but can take the form of a “platform monologue,” such as a political address, stand-up comedy routine, lecture, dramatic recitation, or poetry reading. Within this “participation framework,” the notion of a *hearer* assumes an official status as a *ratified* (authorized or approved) participant, which is further broken down into the *addressed* and *unaddressed*. Although not *ratified*, equally important is the purposeful *eavesdropper*, the unintentional *overhearer*, and the *bystander*. Likewise, the notion of *speaker* is categorized according to three different kinds of function. In talk, one of the two participants “moves his lips up and down to the accompaniment of his own facial (and sometimes bodily) gesticulations, and words can be heard issuing from the locus of his mouth. He is the sounding box in use [...], the talking machine, [...] a body engaged in acoustic activity” (1981:144). This function is that of the *animator*. However, in using the term “speaker,” we often think of someone who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded, and this is the *author* of the words that are heard. Moreover, a speaker is a *principal*, someone whose beliefs have been told, someone who is committed to what the words express. In Goffman’s view, the same individual can alter the social role in which he is active even though his capacity as animator and author remains constant. He likens this shift in the social role, or *footing*, to “changing hats” in committee meetings, acknowledging at the same time that these roles have institutionalized exceptions, such as reciting and simultaneous interpreting.



In regard to the interpreters in the study, if we were to place their narratives within Goffman's participation framework, Sohma might be labeled as the only one who openly acts as *author*, judging from her willingness to edit the speaker's message. She was in fact the only one who did not respond directly to the question as to whether she considered an interpreter a *kurogo*. Instead, she explained that "the most important thing is empathy. And how you can make others understand what's being said. [...] So, in the end, it comes down to why you interpret. For what purpose. This, I think, is fundamental."

Nishiyama, on the other hand, strongly believed in the invisibility of the interpreter:

So, interpreters are there and although not actually transparent, they seem invisible. That is the ideal situation, although, lately, being in a booth makes you invisible anyway. But even when you are interpreting in a face-to-face interaction, and you see an interpreter there, the interpreter should be invisible. The speaker should be looking at the other speaker, not the interpreter. When I do interpreting, I intentionally look away so that people automatically look towards the speaker. This is how I do interpretation. That is when I realize that I am present in person, but should only remain as a voice to convey messages. That is the ideal way.

The phrase "a voice to convey messages" summarizes Nishiyama's view of interpreter-as-*animator*, although his narratives of the actual interpreting practice reveal that he at times acted inadvertently as *author*.

Muramatsu held the traditional view of the interpreter acting as *kurogo*, a common metaphor in the Japanese interpreting profession, which he used spontaneously. At the same time, however, he admitted that "a little adjustment of the actor's *kimono* was in order." He stated that his belief in interpreting was:

[...] translate in such a way that it is what the speaker might say if he were able to speak the target language. So, if Nakasone speaks militantly and macho-like, I think the interpreter should translate it that way, with a militant tone. If somebody speaks in a roundabout way, then, you should translate it in a roundabout way. That's our job.

This statement can be summarized as the interpreter-as-*animator* view

However, precisely for this reason, he ended up acting as *author* in translating Prime Minister Nakasone's famous "unsinkable aircraft carrier" remark (see Torikai 2009). For Muramatsu, it may have been simply "*kurogo* adjusting the hem of the actor's *kimono*," but in retrospect he clearly acted as *author* when he opted for the adjective "unsinkable" to describe the aircraft carrier rather than a simple equivalent adjective such as "big."

Komatsu expressed a complex outlook on the discussion of the interpreter's role. He did not think interpreters were invisible, and yet he believed that they were "machines," in spite of his acting as *author* when needed.

Komatsu: I think I contributed to improving the quality of interpreting in Japan, but I really don't feel I contributed much to things like U.S.-Japan relations... [...] Of course, if you are a professional, it is only natural that you'll make a meeting go smoothly. Otherwise, you can't call yourself a professional. I think I've done good work, but I just happened to be ... In that sense, I can view myself as a machine

Torikai: A machine?

Komatsu: A machine, in my view. Relatively a good one, you could say...

The only interpreter who dared to act as a *principal* was Kunihiro, although he acknowledged what he did was out of the ordinary, not orthodox, and he made sure that the norm was "to remain a *kurogo*."

It can be safely summarized from these narratives that in practice the interpreters did not necessarily abide by the norms they expressed. Table 1 provides a brief description of the cultural attitude of the interpreters, their perceived role, and the actual role they played.

**Table 1.** Cultural attitude, perceived role, and actual role of the interpreters

	Cultural attitude	Perceived role	Actual practice
Nishiyama	Indifferent	<i>animator</i> (invisible)	<i>author</i>
Sohma	Indifferent	<i>author</i> (editor)	<i>author</i>
Kunihiro	Indifferent	<i>author</i> (not a machine)	<i>author/principal</i>
Muramatsu	Indifferent	<i>animator</i> ( <i>kurogo</i> )	<i>author</i>
Komatsu	Negative	<i>animator</i> (visible machine)	<i>author</i>

It is noteworthy to compare their role perception with their actual practice. Sohma articulated her positioning as "interpreter who edits" and Kunihiro insisted that the interpreter is "not a machine," thereby aligning themselves with the *author* function. Nishiyama was the strongest advocate of the "invisible interpreter," which reflects his interpreter-as-*animator* view. The role perception held by Muramatsu and Komatsu can be classified basically as *animator*, with slight differences between them. While Muramatsu allowed some room for mediation, using the analogy of "*kurogo* arranging the hem of the actor's *kimono* on stage," Komatsu described the interpreter as "a visible machine," an oxymoron that combines the two opposing views of the interpreter. Nonetheless, the reality is that all five interpreters acted as *author* in actual practice. Kunihiro represents an exceptional

case of acting as *principal* at Prime Minister Miki's 1975 press conference in Washington, D.C. (see Torikai 2009), but this had more to do with his comradeship with Miki Takeo than with his duty as interpreter. Of course, why and how he did it reveals his abundant knowledge and understanding of culture in American political discourse.

The relationship between the interpreters' attitudes toward culture and their role perception remains obscure. In their interviews, Sohma and Nishiyama both took culture for granted, saying they did not perceive any differences between the two cultures, but their role perceptions were at opposite poles, with Sohma acknowledging the mediator role, not hesitating to edit the source text, and Nishiyama remaining faithfully invisible, at least in his role perception.

Muramatsu and Kunihiro did not volunteer to talk about culture, but Muramatsu exhibited his cultural awareness when he discussed interpreting for Sony's Ibuka, and mentioned the name of the cultural anthropologist Ruth Benedict. He expressed a *kurogo* view of the interpreter's role, close to the interpreter-as-*animator* perception. However, his implicit awareness of language and culture led him to act as *author* in rendering Prime Minister Nakasone's "*ohkina fune* (a big ship)" remark as an "unsinkable aircraft carrier," for which he was severely criticized. Kunihiro likewise was not interested in talking about culture but from time to time showed his expertise in cultural anthropology when, for example, he narrated his reason for studying in Hawaii or called his tour of the U.S. as an escort interpreter "ethnography." Not surprisingly, Kunihiro, with his understanding of language and culture, was a proponent of active interpreting, rejecting the interpreter-as-machine model, and practicing what he preached, although he was well aware of the professional norm of neutrality and *kurogo*-style invisibility. Komatsu was the only one who held negative views about culture, adamant in his opposition to the notion of "cultural clarifier." He held a complex view of the role of interpreter — perceiving it as a "machine" but "never invisible." He considers himself "a visible machine, a good machine." And yet, a close analysis of his narratives exemplifies that in practice, he was very much a cultural mediator, as is clear from his interpreting for Prime Minister Obuchi. He was obviously aware of the cultural implications of being too modest in English and was ready to intervene in softening the original expression to accommodate the target audience, in this case, English-speaking foreign guests.

To summarize, in spite of their reluctance to discuss cultural issues and their professed views on the role of interpreters, all of them, without exception, acted in their professional practice as *author*, endowed with intercultural communicative competence. Their interpreting practice was intricately woven with "out-of-awareness cultural values" (Hall 1952/1973) and core beliefs in communication, which are none other than what is broadly termed "culture."

## Conclusion

Although the Japanese pioneer interpreters perceived their role as more or less invisible, showing little if any interest in discussing culture — one even objected to the notion of cultural mediation — their narratives indicate that, in practice, they were indeed essential partners in intercultural communication, clearly bridging cultural barriers. When they did not step in to overtly mediate cultural gaps, it was their autonomous decision based on their own judgment. Without being conscious of their role as such, the five interpreters were nonetheless deeply involved in intercultural communication as co-constructors of the interaction.

The discussion of culture in interpreting will have to be explored more deeply and perhaps more widely across cultures so that we may gain further insights into interpreting as a profession and thus contribute to understanding the issues between and around differing cultures, the “most problematic relations of today’s world” (Anthony Pym 2008:25). That understanding is a prerequisite for sustaining a multicultural and multilingual world.

## Endnotes

1. In this article, Japanese names are presented in the Japanese order, with family name first, followed by given name, as proposed by *Kokugo Shingikai* (the National Language Council of Japan) in 2000.
2. In Japan, the term ‘doji tsuyaku’ (simultaneous interpreter) is more commonly used than ‘kaigi tsuyaku’ (conference interpreter).
3. Kunihiro, in translating Hall (1966), used the term ‘*ibunka-kan ni okeru komyunikeishon*’ for intercultural communication. Kato Hidetoshi, one of the earliest scholars to introduce the field in Japan, recalls that Kunihiro discussed with him how the term “intercultural communication” should be translated into Japanese and settled on “*ibunka-kan komyunikeishon*” (Torikai 2009:165).
4. The term ‘additive bilingualism’ refers to a form of bilingualism that results when students add a second language to their intellectual tool-kit while continuing to develop conceptually and academically in their first language (Cummins 2000:37).
5. Ruth Benedict is a cultural anthropologist, well known for her book: *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (1946).
6. Obuchi Keizo was Japan’s prime minister from July 1998 to April 2000.
7. *Ramen* is Chinese noodles in soup that is cheap and very popular in Japan. You find a small *ramen* shop in any town. Obuchi’s expression introducing himself as “an old man running a tiny *ramen* place around the corner” is a metaphor, probably meaning an ordinary person you meet anywhere.

8. Both are famous department stores in Japan.

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# Images of the court interpreter

## Professional identity, role definition and self-image

Ruth Morris

Today's legal system generally demands that the interpreter function as a "faceless voice," a conduit, that is, in a "neutral" and non-intrusive way. However, research has shown that in practice this is not the case, and interpreters themselves are increasingly coming to see their role as going beyond the narrow linguistic one. This article argues that inevitably, as interpreters exert influence on the proceedings in which they perform, these proceedings have a greater or lesser impact on the interpreters. The researcher often has little if any direct access to the recipients or the providers of interpreting services, and hence court records are generally used as a source of information on attitudes toward interpreters and interpreted events. A seventeenth-century murder trial in England provides valuable insights into views on interpreting on the part of the bench, the clerk of the court, and the accused. In addition, several modern cases are discussed, indicating a gradual change in attitudes, with an increasing emphasis on competency rather than availability, and a greater acceptance of a more comprehensive role for the interpreter. Finally, this article examines a rare case of an interpreter reporting on an interpreted event at which he worked, indicating that the interpreter does not "check his humanity" at the courtroom door.

**Keywords:** spoken-language interpreters, attitudes to interpreters, transmission belt, conduit, illegal aliens, humanity, post-traumatic stress symptoms, unfair proceedings, civic duty

In the legal system, spoken-language interpreters typically function as "faceless voices." When, exceptionally, interpreters appear in their own right in court proceedings, this tends to be the result of comments about their work product, such as its provision or absence, its quality, or some other aspect related to the delivery of interpreting services, whether during the trial itself or in a pre-trial phase, especially during police questioning. Sometimes — and commendably — before the start of proceedings, interpreters may be questioned in open court as to their



professional qualifications, experience, or background in order to ensure that they are indeed suitable to provide interpretation at that particular legal event. At the same time, these individuals may appear only in parentheses, when the speaker is identified as speaking “through an interpreter.” The interpreter’s name may or may not appear in court or police records, and sometimes it may not be at all clear in which language speakers expressed themselves and whether the words recorded were those of the identified speaker or the interpreter. This was the case in the Eichmann trial transcript, when members of the bench sometimes questioned the accused in his native German (Morris 1999).

Over the decades, members of the legal profession in a variety of jurisdictions have commented on and expressed their wishes relating to the role performed by interpreters (Morris 2007). Various images have been used by legal actors to describe the human beings who transfer a message delivered in one language into another in a legal setting, including a transmission belt, a transmission wire or telephone, a court reporter, a bilingual transmitter, a translating machine, a (mere) conduit or channel, a cipher, an organ conveying (presumably reliably) sentiments or information, a mouthpiece, and a means of communication (Morris 1993b:221–223). Interpreters do not necessarily agree with these views and their related implications. For example, not all interpreters will agree to be viewed as individuals lacking an “intelligent interest in the proceedings” (*R. v Attard*), although this may well suit counsel. Furthermore, most interpreters would probably object to being told that they “do not have to hear, just interpret” (Cardenas 2001:24).

In contrast to the ostensible and presumed transparency of the interpreter in legal settings traditionally favored by legal players, a growing body of research has shown over the last three decades that the interpreter does not in fact function as a conduit, a much-favored simile among judicial personnel. Susan Berk-Seligson’s seminal 1980s studies of the bilingual courtroom in the United States revealed that, contrary to the legal system’s fundamental assumption, interpreters are indeed an intrusive element in legal proceedings, the content of which is inevitably affected by their involvement (Berk-Seligson 1990). Backing up this finding, Sandra Hale’s subsequent studies in Australia identified pragmatic changes that occurred during Australian court interpreting practice (Hale 2004). More recently, a number of researchers (Hale 2008, Mikkelsen 2008, Herráez and Rubio 2008) have explored the evolving views and controversies over the role of interpreters working in a variety of law enforcement and legal settings.

In modern studies of interlingual interpreting outside the traditional conference setting, the main focus has been on those settings in which “public service” or “community” interpreting is required. Sometimes legal settings, whether in the narrow context of the courtroom or within broader frameworks, are included in

this field; in other traditions or approaches, legal — also known as court, judicial or judiciary — interpreters are considered a breed apart from their non-legal colleagues, and as such subject to a specific set of constraints unique to the legal sphere. Increasingly, as the literature shows, interpreters in community or public service interpreting settings see themselves as having to act sometimes as cultural mediators or brokers, in addition to performing their traditional narrow linguistic remit (Valero-Garcés and Martin 2008). Thus, in a paper on controversies over the role of the court interpreter, Hale discusses five current roles prescribed or adopted by interpreters: advocate for the minority language speaker, including cultural brokerage or mediation; advocate for the institution or the service provider; gatekeeper; facilitator of communication; and faithful renderer of others' utterances (Hale 2008: 102–119).

The present article sets out to demonstrate that those individuals who appear in legal events are indisputably more than mere bilingual listening and speaking machines, more than translation robots, and definitely more than “mere cyphers” (*R v. Attard*). Irrespective of how they perceive their role, and of how well they perform in a particular proceeding or on a particular day, interpreters have lives outside the courtroom and other legal settings. They may also have their own thoughts about what goes on in the proceeding of which they are indisputably a part. Some researchers have written about a specific interpreted event and the impact that it has on those engaged to act as interpreters in those proceedings.

A notable example involves the interpreters at the hearings of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The impact can apply *mutatis mutandis* since, as Wiegand writes, interpreters at the Commission inevitably brought along “baggage” of their own, which, combined with the shortness of the training provided, affected the reconciliation process as a whole (2000: 208). Wiegand makes the point that because interpreters constantly speak in the first person, they are more susceptible to assuming the emotions of the witnesses (2000: 211). Some interpreters at the TRC resigned as a result of the various stresses: practical, professional, personal, and psychological. Wiegand describes the formal and informal support structures available to the interpreters for coping with the stress involved with performing their tasks, as well as the classic post-traumatic stress symptoms displayed by many. Such symptoms continued to plague many interpreters well after the hearings had ended. Wiegand states that only a few interpreters made use of the debriefing service put at the disposal of the commissioners, committee members and officials by the TRC, but those who did use it found it very helpful (2000: 210). Arguably, had such support been available to their predecessors at the Nuremberg Tribunals, more individuals who possessed the requisite linguistic capacities might have been able to cope with the stresses of interpreting the testimony and might not have had to switch to tasks other than interpreting (Gaiba 1998).

Regardless of the prescriptions and proscriptions of any codes of ethics and professional conduct that may govern interpreters in a given system, interpreters do not “check their humanity” at the door of the courtroom, nor of the police station or precinct house. What they do, as Fox (2001) shows clearly in the context of interpreting for victims of torture, is try to perform professionally, which may mean adapting their behavior to meet the expectations and style of the other professionals in the situation in which the interpretation is being provided.

In court records over the centuries, at times — although exceptionally — the spotlight is trained on the court interpreter’s normally shadowy existence. This article will examine a number of instances of this phenomenon, ranging from a defendant’s insightful attitude toward interpreters at his 1682 English murder trial, through modern trial courts’ views on the status of court interpreters and the performance of their role, to an interpreter’s soul searching about working at a 2008 mass processing of illegal aliens in Iowa.

### Attitudes toward interpreters at a 1682 murder trial

The seventeenth-century case of *Borosky aka Boratzi* provides a rich research seam that greatly merits mining. The case involves a political assassination in England. The four men accused of the crime were a German aristocrat, Charles John Count Coningsmark, a Pole (“Polander”), called George Borosky alias Boratzi, and two other men, the Pomeranian-born youngest son of a “very good gentleman” who turned highwayman, known as Captain Christopher Vratz, and Lieutenant John Stern, the illegitimate son of a Swedish baron, both described as “gentlemen.”

The record states that when Borosky was called on to plead, “Sir Nathanael Johnson was sworn as interpreter to take the pleas of all the prisoners” (*Borosky* column 8). No details other than the interpreter’s name are given. Later, another interpreter, by the name of Vandore, reported that “Borosky had already pleaded Not Guilty” (col. 8). It may be surmised that Vandore was working into French, and Sir Nathanael from French, but none of this is made clear. The following exchange then takes place between Sir Nathanael and two of the lord chief justices (Pemberton and North) on the three-judge bench hearing the case:

Lord Chief Justice:    Then, sir Nathanael Johnson, if you can make him understand it, tell him that our manner of trial here is by twelve men, and that is by putting himself upon the country, and therefore ask him, how he will be tried. Tell him that the method is by saying, ‘By God and the Country.’<sup>1</sup>

- Sir N. Johnson: My lord, he is a very dull kind of man, he knows not how to answer, nor what to say; nor won't say any thing, that is the truth of it.
- Lord Chief Justice (Sir Francis Pemberton): Ask him if he is willing to be tried after the manner of the English.
- Sir N. Johnson: Yes, he says he is willing to be tried after the manner of the English.
- Lord Chief Justice North: He hath pleaded Not Guilty, and the other follows of course.
- Lord Chief Justice: Ask the captain the same thing.
- Sir N. Johnson: He desires a French interpreter, for he speaks French.
- Lord Chief Justice: Surely here are enough people that understand French, but ask him if he does not understand English.
- Sir N. Johnson: He can understand some, he says.
- Lord Chief Justice: Then ask him whether he be Guilty or not.
- Sir N. Johnson: He says he is Not Guilty, my lord. (col. 8)

This exchange is an example of what would be considered very bad practice today. The interpreter uses the third person instead of the first, the judge fails to address the accused directly, and the interpreter makes dismissive comments about one of his clients. However, subsequently, when the three accused are given a version of the charges against them in “their language,” there is more good practice than bad:

- L.C.J. (Sir Francis Pemberton): Why you must read this to them now in their language, or else they cannot understand it.
- L.C.J. North: You that are the interpreter, tell them that you are going to interpret the indictment to them by degrees.
- Mr. Vandore: Yes, my lord, I will.
- L.C.J.: Do not read all the circumstantial, but only the substance of the indictment. (col. 7)

While Lord Chief Justice Sir Francis Pemberton wanted the interpreter to enable the accused to understand the charges against them, his counterpart, Lord Chief Justice North, instructed Mr. Vandore, the interpreter (identified by name in the record but addressed by the chief justice as “you that are the interpreter”), to provide a summary version only, in other words, to act as a gatekeeper (Hale’s third category). The Clerk of the Crown, however, seemed to be a conscientious man and read out the charges in a way that could be interpreted properly: “Then the Clerk of the Crown went near the bar, and dictated to the Interpreter deliberately, who interpreted it to the prisoners” (col. 7). And so, the interpreter in *Gradidge* (below) was not alone in refusing to follow judicial instructions due to her professional conscience.

After the legal and linguistic preliminaries for the three “ordinary” accused had thus been dealt with in a somewhat summary fashion, decisions were then taken in open court with regard to interpreting arrangements for the “important” figure in the trial, the well-connected Count Coningsmark:

Lord Chief Justice Pemberton:	Now then ask my lord Coningsmark what he says.
Sir Nathanael Johnson:	He speaks English, my Lord.
L.C.J. Pemberton:	But not well enough, may be, to understand the whole. (col. 9)

Here Lord Chief Justice Pemberton underscores the need to safeguard the noble-born defendant’s rights. He demonstrates an awareness of the fact that although an individual has some ability to speak a language (active competence), this may not necessarily be accompanied by perfect or even adequate comprehension skills (passive linguistic competence). Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the language used in legal proceedings is far more challenging than the common language. Many a judicial figure has failed to grasp these all-important distinctions.

In the subsequent exchanges, the emphasis is laid on the fact that this is a capital trial, and hence quality interpreting is required to give the accused the best chance of defending himself effectively. Notably, quality control among and by interpreters is identified as a vital issue:

L.C.J. North:	Sir Nathanael, what does he say?
Sir N.J.:	My Lord, he says it is a concern of his life, and therefore he desires he may have not only one Interpreter, but others: he desires he may have two or three, that they may make no mistake.
L.C.J.:	Very well. (col. 9)

Lord Coningsmark is clearly aware of the possibility, not to say the inevitability, of errors occurring in interpreting situations, and the concomitant need for the utmost accuracy. The latter can be better achieved by team interpreting, where interpreters can relieve each other at regular intervals, thereby avoiding the fatigue which inevitably leads to errors; they can also consult with each other regarding problems over understanding or expression. To this day, many legal systems refuse to acknowledge the need for team interpreting in lengthy proceedings, although NAJIT, the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators of the United States, has described it as the “industry standard in courtrooms, international conferences, negotiations and other venues where continuous interpreting is required for periods of over one hour” (NAJIT 2007: 1).

The next point is a confirmation of the nobleman's preferred language — German (referred to here as “Dutch,” as in the usage “Pennsylvania Dutch”) — with additional justification for the use of team interpreting:

Sir N.J.:                      He says that I understand the Dutch language; but his life and honour are concerned, and therefore he would have three or four. (col. 9)

Here Sir Nathanael, if the record is accurate, mixes up the first and third person in a single sentence, both complying with and breaching interpreting etiquette. In an interesting escalation, the defendant's original wish for “two or three” interpreters has now turned into a desideratum of “three or four” in order to safeguard not just his life, as in the first application, but also his honor. Stephen comments: “This also seems to have been allowed, but the interpreters were not forthcoming” (Stephen 1902:231). Such “no shows” by interpreters are not an unknown phenomenon in modern court systems either and may lead to individuals being detained for longer than should be the case. Coningsmark then applies through Sir Nathanael Johnson to have his case taken separately, and to have it postponed; both requests are refused. The reader is now confused as to the precise role played by Sir Nathanael Johnson — an issue commented on later in the proceedings.

Exceptionally, but logically in this iconic case, the defendant is then consulted on his preferred choice of interpreter. Confusingly, the record writer twice uses the name Thynn, the murder victim:

L.C.J.:                      Who would he have?  
 Sir N.J.:                      Sir Thomas Thynn\* [\*So in the former edition] said they had one that was brought by them. [Note: Thomas Thynn was the murder victim.]  
 Mr. Thynn [sic]:              That is Vandore, who is sworn already. (col. 9)

Now that all the linguistic aspects appear to have been dealt with, Lord Chief Justice North becomes impatient and tries to override the accused's clearly stated preference for team interpreting into German:

L.C.J.                      Look, you sir Nathanael, tell my Lord if he pleases, he shall have a French Interpreter; for I know he speaks that language very well. (col. 9)

This somewhat testy offer by Lord North is rejected by the accused, but this time the emphasis is laid on his active linguistic ability, something which seems to imply that he expects to be speaking on his own behalf during the trial:

Sir N.J.                      My Lord, he says, that High-Dutch is his natural language, and he can express himself best in that. (col. 9)

This is an interesting point, since at this time accused persons had no right to give evidence in their own defense. This right was not restored to defendants in criminal cases in England and Wales until the Criminal Evidence Act of 1893. Before this Act, defendants in nearly all the most serious criminal trials were barred from giving evidence in their own defense (Allen 2004:239, note 3). This had been the case up to and including the 1603 trial of Sir Walter Raleigh, but as a result of “the common-law reaction against these abuses of the Raleigh trial,” where following prevailing practice the accused was denied the right to give evidence or to call evidence on his behalf, “before the Century was out, those rights were expressly conferred on defendants in all cases by Act of Parliament” (Morris 2003).

Most unfortunately, after Lord Coningsmark has insisted on his language choice, his interpreter again fails to appear: “Then one Vanbaring was called for by the Count, but did not appear” (col. 9).

By now the record has already referred to two interpreters by name, which is fairly unusual in modern practice. Clearly in the seventeenth century, the interpreter’s persona was not ignored. This is also true in another emblematic case for interpreting research, the 1820 *Bill of Pains and Penalties against Queen Caroline*, in which the two highly professional Italian-English interpreters were not only identified by name but also played a major role in the trial as cultural informants, both in response to questions from the court and on their own initiative (Morris 2000:257).

The time now comes in the *Borosky* proceedings for explicit commentary on the attributes that make an interpreter unprofessional. The following observations, made by lawyer Sir Francis Winn, could have come straight from a modern code of ethics:

We observe what a sort of interpreter sir N. Johnson is: he speaks more like an advocate than an interpreter; he mingles interpreter, and witness, and advocate together, I don’t know what to make of him. (col. 64)

A little later, Sir Nathanael Johnson’s behavior again upsets Sir Francis Winn:

You may observe, my lord, how sir Nathaniel Johnson is a witness, and argues for the prisoner too. (col. 66)

For interpreters to testify for and advocate on behalf of their clients is entirely unprofessional, as is quite rightly observed in *Borosky*. Many a more modern trial has suffered from such interpreter behavior, as documented by Kate Holladay Claghorn’s masterly 1923 study of the courts and the foreign-born defendant in the United States in the early years of the twentieth century, *The Immigrant’s Day in Court*. This seminal text discusses how justice and injustice were meted out to the foreign-born offender, and the references to interpreting practice are hair-raising

(see Morris 2007: 104–105, fn. 4). The more recent introduction of codes of ethics and best practice for interpreters in some legal systems may not have entirely eliminated such behavior, but at least the professional interpreter's position is better protected in cases of challenge to the interpreter's behavior, as illustrated by the 1988 Australian case of *Gradidge* (Morris 2007: 108–110).

Today's global village, foreshadowed in Claghorn's book, was inexpressibly far removed from the world in which the justices in the *Borosky* case were living. This is shown clearly by the following exchange following Sir Francis' comment above:

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Sir Francis Winn:   | But, my lord, we desire to take notice of Sir Nathanael's forwardness; for it may be a precedent in other cases.   |
| Lord Chief Justice: | What do you talk of a precedent? When did you see a precedent of a like trial of strangers, that could speak not a word of English; but you would fain have the Court thought hard of, for doing things that are extraordinary in this case. (col. 66) |

Sir Nathanael's behavior is criticized, and he is chastised for giving evidence himself. However, this is hardly surprising since the prosecution representative made the common mistake of requiring the interpreter to put questions to the defendants or witnesses and report on their responses. Clearly, the interpreter's role and duties had not been made clear to the aristocratic gentleman referred to above, who had presumably been pressed into service on an *ad hoc* basis. Nor did the judges obey the basic rules of holding a trial through an interpreter, i.e., using the second person in directly addressing the individual who does not speak the language of the proceedings, and not saying to the interpreter "ask him" and the like. It is noteworthy that Sir Francis Winn turned out to be remarkably percipient regarding future needs for interpreting in English legal cases, including codes of conduct.

Also pertinent to this case is the concept of the mixed jury (*jury de medietate linguae* — literally "of the half tongue"), an option offered to foreign defendants at the time.<sup>2</sup> In the days when this *jury de medietate linguae* system prevailed, a foreigner's inability to follow evidence in the language of the court did not necessarily constitute grounds for challenge. This is illustrated by a comment by Mr. Williams during the swearing in of the jury in *Borosky*: "We waive our challenge: for the reason why we challenged him was, because *he did not understand English*, which will be *no reason at all*."<sup>3</sup> Comments in *Borosky* about whether bilingual witnesses should give their own version of their testimony or whether the interpreter should be responsible for the French make it clear that, one way or the other, any juror who did not understand English would be kept abreast of the evidence in this trial (cols. 37–38 and 62). At the trial, a witness speaking both French and English was



initially allowed to repeat his testimony in French to those of the jury *de medietate linguae* who did not understand English; but on further objection an interlingual interpreter was used (see Morris 1993b: 166, fn. 74; Morris 2000: 254–257).<sup>4</sup>

### Modern trial courts' views on the status of court interpreters

There are a number of constants in interpreted proceedings which can be seen as clearly in the seventeenth century case of *Borosky* as at the Nuremberg Tribunals, despite certain striking differences. Like Hermann Göring, who referred to the simultaneous interpretation provided at Nuremberg as shortening his life (Gaiba 1998: 110), Lord Coningsmark was all too aware of the interpreter's power to influence the outcome of his trial. Insofar as interpreting is still to this day performed by human beings, human error can and undoubtedly does occur, an issue which should be considered by judicial authorities (see Morris 1993b, Morris 1993c).

However, according to at least one judicial view, the latter does not negate the assumption that interpreting has been done properly. The 1984 Kansas case of *Van Pham* notes at 860: "There is a rebuttable presumption an interpreter in the performance of his official duty has acted regularly. Merely because an interpreter has had some problems in translating is not sufficient to rebut this presumption." In addition, the *Van Pham* court went on to show a sophisticated understanding of language issues: "Courts have recognized [...] that words in one language may not have an exact companion in another language and it is therefore impossible in certain circumstances for an interpreter to convey the precise language of the witness to the court. There are situations in which the interpreter may testify to the sense in which he or she understood the witness" (*Van Pham* at 860).

With regard to interpreter competency the *Van Pham* appeal court quotes the *Kansas Annotated Statutes*, Section 75–4354, which state:

While a party may challenge the competency of an interpreter, only the trial judge may remove an interpreter. In other words, the competency of an interpreter is for the trial court to determine. Further, it is for the court to determine whether a challenge to an interpreter's competency at trial has been justified.

On this important issue, where, ultimately, does control lie, with the trial court judge or with the interpreter? In 1998, Judge Samuels commented as follows in the Australian *Gradidge* appeal (at 425): "For present purposes it is essential to balance what procedural fairness requires in circumstances such as this against the necessity to permit a trial judge to retain the ultimate command of order and decorum in his or her court." The issue had been whether the sign-language interpreter had overstepped her brief in continuing to interpret to her client everything said

in open court even after the trial judge had instructed her to stop. Judge Samuels went on to observe (at 425), “The task of the interpreter in short is to remove any barriers which prevent understanding or communication. This must, of course, be subject to the overriding right of the judge, first to determine whether those barriers exist and, secondly, to decide in what way the corrective mechanisms may be applied without disrupting or adversely affecting the forensic procedures which he is charged to undertake.” However, the learned judge qualified this statement by further observing (at 426), “The task of an interpreter is not restricted merely to passing on the questions when the party is giving evidence; it must be extended also to appraising a party of what is happening in the court and what procedures are being conducted at a particular time.”

Clearly drawing on his own experience in the lower courts, Judge Samuels then went on to make the following observations (at 426), which are of great importance to court interpreters’ performance of their duties:

We are all aware that this is not uncommonly done and sometimes a judge may have to ask an interpreter to speak a little more quietly or remonstrate when altercations develop, as they sometimes do, between the interpreter and the party. All of these things, when they occur, must be determined and dealt with by the trial judge. I emphasise, however, that it is quite wrong to imagine that all an interpreter is supposed to do is to translate questions for a person in the witness-box.

Judge Samuels is referring specifically to the interpreter’s role in keeping the person who does not understand the language of the court abreast of the proceedings. This involves far more than acting as a “conduit.” Judge Samuels acknowledges that “the use of an interpreter, particularly one as indefatigable as this one, might produce irritations and frictions which heighten the emotions which are commonly to be tapped in most forensic procedures” (*Gradidge* at 427) However, it is undeniable that some individuals are worse than others. This is made very clear in a case where the appellate court ruled that the interpreter was “unsatisfactory,” being incompetent, morally unfit and physically unfit as well, by virtue of being drunk. In this 1910 Canadian case, *R. v. Walker and Chinley*, the British Columbia Court of Appeal noted (per Chief Justice of Appeal Macdonald, at 106) that the defense lawyer’s challenge to this particular interpreter was rejected by the trial court, and reported:

The prisoners’ counsel contends that though the learned trial judge has stated plainly ... that the interpreter was “objectionable,” and that “I certainly did consider the interpreter unsatisfactory,” and that he considered the word ‘objectionable’ as being synonymous with unsatisfactory and to a certain degree unreliable,” and that “the interpreter certainly seemed to lack ordinary intelligence and facility of expression” ..... yet notwithstanding all these defects, the learned judge

permitted the interpreter to attempt to discharge duties which he had shewn himself incompetent to perform.

The appellate justices also observed, “The learned judge also states that he was satisfied that the interpreter was ‘the least objectionable or unsatisfactory one available’” (Walker and Chinley at 125). A further polite but stinging observation by Judge Martin holds within it a common-sense approach that should constitute the bedrock of all situations in which an interpreter’s services are needed: “That, with all due deference, is clearly no ground for accepting his services, because the test is not one of availability but of competency” (Walker and Chinley at 125). Were this test to be applied consistently in interpreted proceedings, many costly miscarriages of justice involving incompetent interpretation might be avoided.

### **The interpreter speaks up**

So far, this article has examined how the interpreter’s power and role are considered by defendants who are not proficient in the language of the proceedings against them, and how both trial and appellate judges and lawyers view a number of issues relating to the interpreter’s position in the legal system. In conclusion, we will now look at a seasoned court interpreter’s own views of the legal proceedings in which he was involved.

In his almost quarter of a century as a certified Spanish interpreter for the United States federal courts, Cuban-born Erik Camayd-Freixas, who holds a Ph.D. from Harvard, has interpreted at numerous criminal trials. However, after interpreting for two weeks in May 2008 at a mass processing of illegal aliens charged with aggravated identity theft and Social Security fraud in Iowa, he felt compelled to compose both a statement (Camayd-Freixas 2008b) and an essay (Camayd-Freixas 2008a) about what had happened there. In his statement, presented to the United States House Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security and International Law, he noted that he had occasion to observe and document thirteen problems in the judicial process, which he went on to list. Some of the issues identified by him are relevant to his subsequent feelings about the procedure at which he interpreted, such as item 9: “Many defendants did not appear to understand their charges or rights, insisting that they were in jail for being in the country illegally (and not for document fraud or identity theft), and insisting that they had no rights” (Camayd-Freixas 2008b: 3).

In his statement, Camayd-Freixas makes the point that in order to accurately interpret the meaning and spirit of the message, the interpreter must identify with and “become” each speaker. “Seeing from within the perspective of the other is a common procedure in legal interpreting” (Camayd-Freixas 2008b: 4). Writing

specifically about the events that had taken place at the meat packing plant in Postville, Iowa, he identifies his dilemma: “When I assumed the perspective of most defendants, I found the charges and rights to be incomprehensible; I felt that a great injustice was being done; and I found their imprisonment, with their families in jeopardy, to be an intolerable burden” (Camayd-Freixas 2008b: 4).

Camayd-Freixas was not, to take Hale’s five categories (Hale 2008: 102–119), advocating for the minority-language speaker nor for the institution or the service provider; nor was he acting as gatekeeper. Rather, he was trying to provide “a fair, complete and impartial interpretation” (NAJIT 2007), in other words Hale’s fifth category. However, in so doing he found that it was impossible to act as a facilitator of communication — Hale’s fourth category — basically because of the fatal flaws in the procedure, combined with the cultural background of the non-English speakers.

In analyzing the defendants’ inability to understand their rights and the charges against them, he determined that this was due to the interplay of four factors. First, it was unclear to what extent the numerous ethnic Mayans understood Spanish as a second language. Second, he noted that there are vast cultural differences between Mexican and Guatemalan rural cultures, on the one hand, and the American legal culture, on the other. Third, in his expert opinion as an educator, he concluded that, “due to their lack of schooling and low rate of literacy, most of the defendants had a level of *conceptual* and *abstract* understanding equivalent to that of a third grader or less.” Therefore, they needed much more time and individualized legal counsel than could remotely be provided by this fast-tracking process, in which every attorney handled an average of 17 clients. And fourth, the court was placed in a position of interdependence with the prosecution, which resulted in its sending very mixed messages, such as “telling defendants in chains, without right of bail, and who are being fast-tracked without regard for individual circumstance, that they have the presumption [of] innocence” (Camayd-Freixas 2008b: 4).

The upshot, for Camayd-Freixas, was that the more he found out, the more he felt “blindsided” into an assignment he wanted no part of: “Even though I understood the rationale for all the secrecy, I also knew that a contract interpreter has the right to refuse a job which conflicts with his moral intuitions. But I had been deprived of that opportunity” (Camayd-Freixas 2008a: 3). To this extent, Camayd-Freixas’s position was somewhat akin to that of the sign-language interpreter in the Australian civil case of *Graddidge*, who felt that her oath and code of ethics required her to do something that was in conflict with what the judge hearing the case required her to do. Her solution was to defy the judge and continue to interpret for her client even when instructed by the judge to stop. Her attitude, discussed in the appeal, was ruled to be correct and in accordance with her rules of professional conduct (*Graddidge v. Grace Bros.* (1988)).

In what is a rare piece of direct testimony by a practicing and experienced court interpreter, Camayd-Freixas describes his resultant feelings as follows: “I seriously considered withdrawing from the assignment for the first time in my 23 years as a federally certified interpreter, citing conflict of interest. In fact, I have both an ethical and contractual obligation to withdraw if a conflict of interest exists which compromises my neutrality” (Camayd-Freixas 2008a: 4). Although conflicts of interest are not unknown in the court interpreting world, it is rare that the legal, moral, and constitutional flaws of the proceeding for which the interpreter has been engaged constitute the specific source of an interpreter withdrawing. It is also rare for interpreters to put in writing the precise issues involved in their conflict of interest. Camayd-Freixas noted that appended to his contract were the *Standards for Performance and Professional Responsibility for Contract Court Interpreters in the Federal Courts*, where it states: “Interpreters shall disclose any real or perceived conflict of interest... and shall not serve in any matter in which they have a conflict of interest.” But, he continues, “The question was did I have one.” His response to his own question was: “Well, at that point there was not enough evidence to make that determination. After all, these are illegal aliens and should be deported — no argument there, and hence no conflict. But should they be criminalized and imprisoned? Well, if they committed a crime and were fairly adjudicated...” (Camayd-Freixas 2008a: 4).

He decided to wait and see: “In any case, none of it would shake my impartiality or prevent me from faithfully discharging my duties.” He noted that in all his years as a court interpreter, he had taken a “front row seat” in countless criminal cases, ranging from rape, capital murder and mayhem, to terrorism, narcotics and human trafficking. “I am not the impressionable kind.” Moreover, as a professor of interpreting, “I have confronted my students with every possible conflict scenario, or so I thought” (Camayd-Freixas 2008a: 4). However, as Camayd-Freixas was to find out, “The truth is that nothing could have prepared me for the prospect of helping our government put hundreds of innocent people in jail. In my ignorance and disbelief, I reluctantly decided to stay the course and see what happened next” (Camayd-Freixas 2008a: 4).

Once these complex issues became clear to this particular thinking, feeling, experienced interpreter involved in the proceedings against these non-English-speaking individuals, his situation became even more stressful. “The right of habeas corpus, but of course! It dawned on me that we were paid overtime, adding hours to the day, in a mad rush to abridge habeas corpus, only to help put more workers in jail. Now I really felt bad. But it would soon get worse. I was about to bear the brunt of my conflict of interest” (Camayd-Freixas 2008a: 5). Although the stresses that Wiegand describes as affecting the interpreters at South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission were very different, and the interpreters in that

case were mainly inexperienced individuals, this veteran interpreter was clearly becoming aware that he was in a situation which would inevitably affect him on the personal level.

Describing what happened when interpreting at a lawyer-client interview during his engagement, Camayd-Freixas identifies the situation as intolerable for everybody: the client, the lawyer, and the interpreter. He writes that the client could not make up his mind what to do — to plead guilty and definitely be sentenced to five months in jail, or to contest the charge and not know how long it would take for his case to be heard. Camayd-Freixas' humanity is clearly obvious in his observation: "None of the 'options' really mattered to him. Caught between despair and hopelessness, he just wept. He had failed his family, and was devastated" (Camayd-Freixas 2008a: 6).

He was unable to make a decision. "You all do and undo," he said. "So you can do whatever you want with me." To him we were part of the system keeping him from being deported back to his country, where his children, wife, mother, and sister depended on him" (Camayd-Freixas 2008a: 6). Clearly, Camayd-Freixas felt that the defendant for whom he was interpreting saw him not just as advocating for the legal institution (Hale's second category) but also as being an integral part of it.

From these extracts, it is all too clear that this particular interpreter, irrespective of whether the system viewed him as an "officer of the court," "witness," "expert," or "merely ... an attendant," was far more than a "mere cipher." Christmas Humphrey may have argued for the prosecution in *R. v. Attard* that "interpreters are in a different position from that of police officers; they are impartial, mere cyphers, and are not expected to take an intelligent interest in the proceedings," but Judge Gorman did not accept his view, instead adopting the defense argument, put forward by Edward Clarke, that "an interpreter is obviously a person who must use his intelligence and be ready to give evidence concerning inflections and matters of that kind in both languages, if necessary, and is a fully competent witness" (*R. v. Attard* at 91).

Clearly, as Camayd-Freixas's account makes abundantly clear, interpreters do not "check their humanity" at the door of the courtroom. Continuing his account of what happened at one of the lawyer-client interviews at which he interpreted, he eloquently puts into words both his own and his client's dilemmas:

His Native American spirit was broken and he could no longer think. He stared for a while at the signature page pretending to read it, although I knew he was actually praying for guidance and protection. Before he signed with a scribble, he said: "God knows you are just doing your job to support your families, and that job is to keep me from supporting mine." There was my conflict of interest, well put by a weeping, illiterate man. (Camayd-Freixas 2008a: 6)

## Conclusion

Whether viewed as a rare event or as something routine, interpreted legal proceedings and concomitantly those who interpret at them are a part of every modern country's judicial system, and of the increasing number of international courts and tribunals. In today's global world, even in a country as closed as Burma, an interpreter was provided at the May 2009 proceedings against opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi for breaching the terms of her house arrest (Mungpi 2009).

The fact that Camayd-Freixas wrote about his thoughts and feelings throughout his days of interpreting at the Postville hearings gives the researcher a rare insight into the position and self-image of the interpreter from the interpreter's own point of view. In what is a very rare occurrence, Camayd-Freixas had the opportunity to speak to the judge before he left and to bring to his attention his concern over what he had learned in the jail interviews. In his own words, "At that point I realized how precious the interpreter's impartiality truly is, and what a privileged perspective it affords" (Camayd-Freixas 2008a: 8). In the common law adversarial system, he notes, only the judge, the jury, and the interpreter are presumed impartial. "But the judge is immersed in the framework of the legal system, whereas the interpreter is a layperson, an outsider, a true representative of the common citizen, much like 'a jury of his peers'" (Camayd-Freixas 2008a: 9). Yet, contrary to the jury, which only knows the evidence on record and is generally unfamiliar with the workings of the law, the interpreter is an informed layperson. Moreover, Camayd-Freixas argues, the interpreter is the only one who gets to see both sides of the coin up close, precisely because he is the only participant who is not a decision maker and is precluded by his oath of impartiality and neutrality from ever influencing the decisions of others. "That is why," Camayd-Freixas goes on to observe, "judges in particular appreciate the interpreter's perspective as an impartial and informed layperson, for it provides a rare glimpse at how the innards of the legal system look from the outside" (Camayd-Freixas 2008a: 9). Most researchers and practicing interpreters — especially those who have been treated without professionalism and courtesy, such as Roxana Cardenas (Cardenas 2001) — have not encountered such considerate members of the bench as did Camayd-Freixas. For this reason, he is able to perceive both his experience and his resultant opportunity in an unequivocally positive light: "I was no longer sorry to have participated in my capacity as an interpreter. I realized that I had been privileged to bear witness to historic events from such a unique vantage point and that because of its uniqueness I now had a civic duty to make it known" (Camayd-Freixas 2008a: 9).

## Epilogue

On 5 May 2009, *The New York Times* reported that the national bar association of immigration lawyers had called on the Justice Department to consider dismissing the guilty pleas of nearly 300 illegal immigrant workers arrested in a raid on a meatpacking plant in Iowa, one day after the Supreme Court rejected a statute that prosecutors used to pressure them. In its decision, the court ruled that to win convictions for identity theft, prosecutors had to show that illegal immigrants knew that the false identification documents they presented to employers actually belonged to another real person (Preston 2009).

The fact that Camayd-Freixas spoke out about what had happened during his interpreting assignment in Iowa has been criticized by some of his colleagues who feel that they should indeed be ciphers and act as nothing more than language conduits. However, the fact that the proceedings subsequently received major media coverage and have been widely criticized, by immigration lawyers among others, may be attributed in no small measure to this particular interpreter's courage, moral fiber, and professionalism. The spirit in which he wrote his essay derives specifically from his pride in his impartiality as an interpreter and the special role that he and his colleagues play in the legal system. As a result, he spoke out, considering this to be part of the same set of views that at times sees interpreters as officers of the court and at others as a valuable adjunct in the administration of justice. That set of views, unfortunately, is often the source of the kind of confusion reflected in the words of Judge McFarland in the 1984 Kansas case of *Van Pham*: "While a person who is engaged in discharging the duties of interpreter is a witness, and may even be regarded as acting in the capacity of an expert, he or she is more than a mere witness. Though in a sense he or she is an officer of the court, an interpreter is best described not as a court officer but merely as an attendant" (*State v. Van Pham* at 861). Fortunately for the cause of justice, Erik Camayd-Freixas did more than merely "attend" the Postville hearings. His view of his professional identity, his thoughts about the interpreter's role definition and self-image may henceforth serve as inspirational food for thought for all those involved in interpreted proceedings.

## Endnotes

1. Capitalization in these citations follows that of the seventeenth-century original.
2. Fukurai 2000: "This term, the jury *de medietate linguae*, literally means jury of the half tongue in Latin because this method of selection applied to people in England or Native Americans



in the U.S. who were considered alien or ethnic minorities. Because those individuals spoke a foreign or different language, the mixed alien juries came to be known as juries *de medietate linguae*. The concept of the jury *de medietate linguae* first originated in the treatment of Jews in twelfth century England (Constable 1994: 18–21). In 1190, King Richard I enacted a charter that provided Jews the right to a half-Jewish jury (Wishman 1986). The English viewed the Jews as aliens in race, religion, and culture and considerable animosity existed against the Jews. Although England subsequently banished all Jews in 1290, foreign merchants from Italy and Germany were also given the privilege of a trial *de medietate linguae* — a trial by a jury composed of half of their own countrymen and the other half with English persons qualified to serve as jurors (Constable 1994). The right of juries *de medietate linguae* in England endured until 1870, when Parliament passed the Naturalization Act, which permitted aliens to serve on juries and to acquire, hold, and dispose of property in the same manner as an England-born citizen, thereby eliminating the need for the mixed jury privilege (Ramirez 1994: 789).” For further discussion, see also the Massachusetts case of *Commonwealth vs. Ricardo Acen, Jr. Commonwealth vs. Alberto Penabriel*, 396 Mass. 472.

3. 9 Howell’s State Trials 1 at 9: “**Clerk of Court.** Moses Charas. [Who appeared.] **Interpreter.** He has nothing to say against him. But he himself says, he does not speak English, but he desires to speak French. **Clerk of Court.** Then tell him in French, he must lay his hand on the book and be sworn, and harken to his oath. **Sir Francis Winnington.** We challenge him for the king. **Lord Chief Justice.** For what cause? **Sir Francis Winnington.** My lord, we take it that we need not shew any cause unless there be any want of the number in the pannel. **Lord Chief Justice.** Then we must do him right, and tell him what advantage the law gives him. Tell my lord, you that understand English, that this gentleman is challenged for the king; and if the king shew any good cause for it, he must not be sworn, else he must. And the way for him to cause the king’s counsel to shew their cause, (if he desire it) is to challenge all the rest. **Mr. Williams.** We wave our challenge: for the reason why we challenged him was, because *he did not understand English*, which will be *no reason at all*. [Then he was sworn.]” Emphasis added.

4. For more on the jury *de medietate linguae*, see Wigmore 1970 and Darbyshire 2001.

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# A professional ideology in the making

## Bilingual youngsters interpreting for their communities and the notion of (no) choice

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Research on circumstantial bilinguals who become young interpreters for their families and communities contributes to our understanding of the life experiences of individuals who begin to interpret early in their lives. With the exception of early work on young interpreters and recent historical work on translation and interpreting, very little has been written about the lived experiences of interpreters and/or about the development of such exceptional types of bilingualism. When a family of Latino immigrants settles in America and the parents do not speak the societal language, it is often the case that young bilinguals act as language interpreters, brokering communication and advocating for their families' needs. The ways in which these circumstantial bilinguals go about mediating communicative needs reveal much about these youngsters' abilities. While interpreting for their families, young interpreters develop a sense of how to be linguistic advocates between speakers of minority languages and a society that struggles to accommodate the communicative needs of its members. In multilingual and diverse societies, it is imperative that the linguistic talents of young bilinguals be fostered and enhanced.

**Keywords:** circumstantial bilinguals, elective bilinguals, linguistic rights, bilingual youngsters, linguistic advocates, societal language, linguistic minority, power imbalances

### Introduction

When a family of Latino immigrants settles in America and the parents do not speak the societal language,<sup>1</sup> it is often the case that the children of these immigrants become family interpreters, or young interpreters, by brokering communication and advocating for their families' needs (Valdés, Chavez and Angelelli

2003). In so doing, they develop a sense of linguistic advocacy between speakers of minority languages and a society that struggles to accommodate the linguistic needs of its members. In addition, these youngsters take it upon themselves to stand up for their families' linguistic rights.

The ways in which these young bilinguals, who are heritage speakers of a non-societal language, go about mediating communicative needs reveal much about their abilities. In addition, they reflect the communicative possibilities (or lack thereof) existing in the society in which these bilinguals grow up. Work with young interpreters, while not focused particularly on the development of a professional ideology, contributes to our understanding of the life experiences of the individuals who begin to interpret early in their lives (Valdés and Angelelli 2003). With the exception of early work on young interpreters (Harris 1977, 1978, 1980, 1992; Toury 1984, 1995) and historical work on translation and interpreting (Baker 1998; Karttunen 1994), very little has been written about the lived experiences of interpreters and/or about the development of such exceptional types of bilingualism. Since many community interpreters of today were interpreters in their late childhood and adolescence, getting a glimpse into their lives and experiences may help researchers and teachers understand the habits and ideology of these individuals, who may later populate interpreter classrooms and workplaces. Before discussing young bilinguals as interpreters in the making, it is imperative to reflect on the interaction between bilingualism and translation and interpreting. Bilingualism is a complex construct. In the next section we discuss its relationship to translation and interpreting.

### **Bilingualism, translation and interpreting**

The field of translation and interpreting is complex and dynamic. In part, this complexity is due to the very nature of bilingualism. Indeed, "bilingualism" is a popular term that covers many different phenomena to the point where it has become virtually meaningless (Haugen 1970:222). The terms "bilingual" and "bilingualism" continue to be used by researchers and educators in various ways, which are not necessarily homogeneous. A number of scholars have provided definitions of bilingualism, ranging from extreme monolithic constructions that claim, for example, that bilingualism can only be attained when there is "the native-like control of two languages" (Bloomfield 1935:56) to broader ones that view bilinguals as individuals with a range of competencies which are not necessarily the same in both languages (Valdés and Figueroa 1994). As such, a bilingual could have minimal competence in reading, writing, speaking or listening in a second language (Macnamara 1967) and may be viewed as a person who can make use of two or

more languages in everyday situations (Valdés 2002). In the field of Translation and Interpreting Studies, bilingualism has not been sufficiently problematized and professional ideology may be closer to the monolithic view than to the broader one. It is important to emphasize that bilinguals differ and cannot be categorized under a set standard. It is even more important to see the connection that different types of bilinguals draw between language and ethnicity (Fishman 1988 and 1999), and how different linguistic identities may shape beliefs and ideologies that get played out during communicative events (Hymes 1974; Angelelli 2000).

Bilingualism is fluid and varies across an individual's lifetime. Researchers have created typologies (see Valdés and Figueroa 1994: 7–20) to help describe bilinguals' abilities. Although categories in typologies reflect the interest and specific focus of researchers (e.g., age of acquisition, life circumstances, dominant language), these categories are nonetheless helpful in understanding the complexity involved in individual and societal bilingualism. This understanding is key to the fields of translation and interpreting, which have considered bilingualism mostly from the linguistic and cognitive (information processing) skill perspective (Gile in Baker 1998: 40–45). The categorization applied by Valdés and Figueroa relates to different types of bilingualism based on age of acquisition, which results in early and late bilinguals, with early bilinguals being further divided into simultaneous or sequential bilinguals. Other perspectives on how to classify a bilingual are based on the point in time when each language was acquired. Thus, for example, according to some, an incipient bilingual is one who is beginning to acquire L2; a receptive bilingual is one who can comprehend written or spoken L2; and a productive bilingual is one who can write and/or speak in L2. Another categorization relies on the relationship between the bilingual's languages: an ambilingual is one who is on a par with two native speakers whereas an equilingual is one who has equivalent proficiency in L1 and L2. Also relevant are the conditions which lead to the bilingual's current state of bilingualism, for example, whether the individual was forced by circumstances to become a bilingual or chose to become one by electing to study another language or to acquire it by spending time in the region where it was spoken. This distinction is described as circumstantial vs. elective (Valdés and Figueroa 1994: 12).

The difficulty faced in defining bilingualism is confounded by the multitude of conditions and situations in which it may occur. Researchers such as Hamer and Blanc (1989), Grosjean (1982), Pfaff (1997), Valdés (2002) and Valdés and Angelelli (2003) have posed the following questions: How do individuals become bilingual? Why do individuals become bilingual? What roles does each language play in the life of the bilingual? How can high levels of bilingualism, like those exhibited by interpreters of different types, be described and measured? Can these types of bilingualism be described without reference to monolingual standards?



For successful interpreters, what are the ultimate levels of attainment in the L2? How is ultimate attainment affected by the contexts of language acquisition? To what degree can diverse life events contribute to language attrition? In addition, the literature on interpreting and interpreters offers the possibility of looking at bilingual individuals in a situated context and raises questions regarding the relationship between majority and minority monolinguals in situations of language contact: Who interprets for whom in which situations? What are the social characteristics of the different kinds of interpreters in terms of language proficiency, life experiences, socio-economic status and ethnicity? And finally, what challenges are encountered by interpreters brokering communication between speakers of more and less dominant languages (Valdés and Angelelli 2003: 69)?

Various attempts have been made to answer these questions across different fields of research including sociolinguistics, linguistics, psycholinguistics, education, political science and history (Angelelli 2003, 2004; Grosjean 1982; Dabène and Moore 1995; Fishman 1991; Valdés and Figueroa 1994; Valdés et al. 2000, 2003). In the field of sociolinguistics, researchers have observed the role that bilingual children play in the U.S., attempting to help their parents by serving as their interpreters and/or translators (Valdés et al. 2000 and 2003). Those parents and family members who do not speak English receive assistance from their children in everything from placing an order at a restaurant to renewing a driver's license or communicating with their doctor (Valdés et al. 2003: 86). Bilingual youngsters step up to interpret for their families and members of their immediate communities in view of the pressing communicative needs of monolingual speakers, the shortage of qualified interpreters and the youngsters' own bilingual abilities. By studying bilingual communities, researchers have shed light on how and why monolingual adults and bilingual youngsters team up to cope with communicative needs.

The existing research, policies and practices in translation and interpreting have recognized the mix of bilinguals described above and have highlighted the bearing that bilingualism has on translation and interpreting, especially insofar as it affects the construction of professionalism and role. It is essential to be mindful of the different types and categories of bilinguals, representing the different upbringings of individuals who perform or may perform as translators or interpreters. Their upbringing greatly affects how they understand different situations and shape their expectations as they provide (or receive) a service. This different conceptualization of what service is, what an interpreter does, and where boundaries between professional and personal roles lie is essential to the socialization of future interpreters and the construction of a professional ideology.

Language and identity are intertwined (Fishman 1988, 1999; Katan 1999), and different types of bilinguals may become translators and interpreters with different expectations, stemming from their language experiences and life circumstances.

On-the-job community interpreters, as well as students who populate translation and interpreting (TandI) classrooms, are in part circumstantial bilinguals. Therefore, it behooves us to reflect on bilingualism and to note the differences between circumstantial and elective bilingualism.

### **Circumstantial or elective bilinguals: Does it matter?**

The intrinsic range of bilingualism poses challenges to the field of translation and interpreting. As discussed in the previous section, research has established that not all bilinguals are identical, and they cannot be subsumed under a single standard (Valdés and Figueroa 1994:7). The challenges are especially salient in the *making* of translators and interpreters. Whether students are on the job or in the classroom, they represent one of the two types of bilinguals: elective bilinguals, who choose to become bilingual, and circumstantial bilinguals, who are forced to do so because of their life circumstances. This difference has a direct impact on the development of their professional ideologies. The elective bilingual generally becomes one through formal education or by taking courses, although it may also be the consequence of elective exposure, e.g., traveling or spending time in the country where the other (elective) language is spoken.

Circumstantial bilinguals need to learn a new language in order to participate fully in the new society, as they find themselves in a place where their first language is no longer sufficient to meet their communicative needs (Valdés and Figueroa 1994:12; Valdés, Brookes and Chávez 2002:24). For example, a Spanish-speaking Mexican family immigrates to the United States to seek economic opportunities. Their ethnic languages, Spanish and Nahuatl, are not the societal language, and they must acquire a certain degree of proficiency in that language, English, in order to participate economically, politically and socially beyond their immediate community. At the same time, they need to maintain their home language to communicate with members of their family and their whole community. Their bilingualism is not a matter of individual choice as much as it is the result of a change in their life circumstances.

Important differences between elective and circumstantial bilinguals are not only the conditions in which languages are acquired but also the relationship between the bilingual groups and the rest of society. An elective bilingual becomes bilingual as an individual. Circumstantial bilinguals are usually members of a group of people who must become bilingual in order to participate more fully in the society around them. Since not all bilinguals are alike, and since different types of bilinguals populate translation and interpreting classrooms, it is essential to bear these differences in mind when educating interpreters. Their different

backgrounds, life experiences and linguistic experiences, as well as their perceptions of their roles and of their own bilingualism, may affect their performance in the classroom.

### **Bilingual youngsters as linguistic advocates: The beginning of a professional ideology**

As discussed earlier, with the exception of the early work on young interpreters by Harris (1977, 1978, 1980, 1992) Harris and Sherwood (1978), Shannon (1987) and Toury (1984, 1995), and historical work on translation and interpreting (Baker 1998; Karttunen 1994), the life experiences of interpreters and the factors in the development of different types of bilingualism have been under-researched. Researchers have looked at translation and interpreting as an innate skill of bilinguals, especially balanced bilinguals. But to the extent that the ability to interpret is a highly advanced specialized function of bilingualism which not all bilinguals possess, research on circumstantial bilinguals is distinct from that on balanced bilinguals and contributes to our understanding of the life experiences of individuals who began to interpret early in their lives (Valdés and Angelelli 2003).

During the first study of young circumstantial bilinguals performing as interpreters, conducted in a high school in California (Valdés et al. 2000, 2003), two distinct findings became apparent. First, although some students were classified by their teachers as low-level English speakers, their English abilities when interpreting for their families were functional, notwithstanding minor errors and disfluencies, so that the meaning of the message was conveyed and understood. Clearly, they were able to understand English at an advanced level (Valdés et al. 2000, 2003). Second, their interpreting skills were sufficiently advanced to allow them to convey the tone and stance of the English message to their parents. These observations attested to an incompatibility between their own experiences at home, where they succeeded in reading complex materials and translating these for their parents, and the assessment of their abilities at school, where they were sometimes placed in the lowest ESL course.

Furthermore, whereas some second- and third-generation children of immigrant families may lose their command of their native language in the process of adapting to the new culture and its language, the students in this study acquired English while retaining Spanish. While teachers of their home language (Spanish) might disapprove of the non-standardness of their speech, these youngsters functioned effectively in interpreting for newly arrived immigrants of different ages and educational backgrounds, and were often called upon to assist teachers

by interpreting for a new student or translating letters and messages intended for parents. In so doing, these young bilinguals were serving as linguistic advocates for their immediate families or communities.

A revealing finding in one study of bilingual youngsters acting as interpreters (Valdés et al. 2000) is that many gifted bilinguals perform interpreting with ease for their families with absolutely no training or formal education in either translation or interpreting. This was also observed in the study of Puerto Rican children living in New York (Zentella 1997), who successfully carried out complex communicative activities as language brokers in bilingual interactions. Their performance may have been marked by disfluencies (Valdés et al. 2003: 147), but they were nevertheless performing a task similar to that of professional translators and interpreters. What set them apart from professional interpreters, however, was (1) that they were mediating the interaction between members of communities with which they had strong bonds and cultural ties, and (2) that they did not have the privilege of choosing among the interactions, settings, topics and situations in which they interpreted. They faced challenging situations which many times involved the welfare of their own family members. This makes situations much more personal and sensitive, and some may perceive their participation as a matter of (no) choice. Young interpreters become advocates, usually for a parent or close family member, under exigent circumstances (Zentella 1997; Valdés et al. 2003). Such situations deserve to be explored rather than taken for granted, judged or ignored. Life circumstances prepare bilingual youngsters for the roles they play, providing them with the necessary repertoire of habits, beliefs, and values, the appropriate models of emotional response and the modes of perception which build upon vital skills and knowledge. A child growing up in a bilingual environment learns about the attitudes, values, and beliefs of a particular community, and about interactions between speakers of the societal language and the non-societal one. For many of these youngsters, helping their own family members with their communicative needs is not only expected of them, but it is their privilege (Valdés et al. 2003; Zentella 1997).

### **Linguistic diversity and the interpreter's notion of (no) choice**

Today, as in the past, linguistic diversity and the phenomenon of languages in contact due to migration, intermarriage, etc. (Grosjean 1982) make it necessary for interpreters to continue to bridge communication gaps between monolingual interlocutors. In the presence of linguistic diversity, monolingual interlocutors have no choice but to resort to interpreting for their communicative needs. Many times pro-

fessional interpreters are not available to meet these needs, and bilinguals (whether adults or youngsters) step up to the plate with varying degrees of success.<sup>2</sup> Some examples include janitors being called upon to interpret in medical settings (Cambridge 1999), or schoolchildren at teacher-parent conferences (Valdés et al. 2003). These bilinguals seem to be drawn into situations in which choices are limited. They can either refuse to act as interpreters and witness how the minority-language speaker is deprived of the right to communicate or they can do their best to assist the member of the minority group, with whom they typically identify. Specifically for bilingual youngsters, “the experience of interpreting for their communities — whatever the views of the service providers, trained interpreters or, for that matter, researchers — offers opportunities for young interpreters to develop very specific strategies for brokering interactions which other youngsters (even other bilingual youngsters) of the same age may never experience. It has been argued (Valdés et al. 2003: 98) that such brokering fosters a variety of exceptional abilities that have yet to be fully understood by educators and researchers.

In a society as diverse as the United States, nurturing and enhancing the linguistic talents of young bilinguals who may or may not become language interpreters is imperative. Many times, however, despite the need for interpreters, these talents are overlooked. Moreover, as many have argued, language rights should be considered basic human rights (Branson and Millers 2000, de Varennes 2000, Hamelink 2000, Lindgren 2000). They are observed when people are allowed to produce talk and text in their own language (Skutnabb-Kangas and Philipson 1994: 1). Conversely, “linguicism” occurs when there are instances of discursive discrimination and marginalization based on language (van Dijk 2000). The importance of language rights “is grounded in the essential role that language plays in human existence, development and dignity” (Manitoba Language Rights, 1985, 1 Supreme Court Reports 721, 744 Canada in de Varennes 2000: 69).

In spite of all the solemn declarations about language rights, information societies and communication revolutions, many of the world’s voices are not heard unless they can be brokered by interpreters. Furthermore, in any given society, people may be allowed to use a foreign or immigrant language, but what if their talk or text does not count, if it is not credible or nobody listens to it or reads it? (van Dijk 2000). To shed light on linguistic voices that sometimes remain unheard unless there is an interpreter present, as well as on the role of bilingual youngsters in this situation, we will now cite the example of monolingual Spanish immigrants and Spanish-English bilinguals, who are either youngsters or interpreters in the making or in training in translation and interpreting classes in the State of California.

The need to provide reliable services to the linguistically and culturally diverse linguistic minorities in the U.S. has proven to be a challenge as a result of such

factors as socio-economic status, power imbalances, age, ethnicity or gender of the interlocutors (Angelelli 2004 b). Bilingual youngsters acting as interpreters for their communities learn how to grapple with these factors as they broker communication. Having grown up in situations in which they witnessed linguisticism (discrimination based on language), or having seen their loved ones being denied access to vital services, they have come to view their own intervention as interpreters as a matter of (no) choice.

### **Language minorities accessing services in California**

The decision to use the example of California is based not only on the fact that this state houses many voices and many languages due to its diverse population, but also on its being the home state of the bilingual youngsters described in the studies mentioned above (Valdes et al. 2000, 2003). As of 2005, 57.59 percent of California residents aged five and older spoke English as a first language at home, while 28.21 percent spoke Spanish as their mother tongue, 2.04 percent spoke Tagalog, 1.06 percent spoke Chinese (0.63 percent Cantonese and 0.43 percent Mandarin), 1.4 percent spoke Vietnamese, and 1.05 percent spoke Korean. In total, 42.4 percent of the California population spoke languages other than English as their native language, and a total of over 200 languages are known to be spoken and read in California (Modern Language Association, 2005).

These patterns have been affecting every aspect of U.S. society, especially in the delivery of services such as health care, justice and education. While government-funded programs for healthcare institutions, for example, are now required to provide interpreting services to limited-English-proficiency (LEP) patients (Allen 2000), and while language can be one of the most “formidable” obstacles to healthcare access by members of ethno-cultural communities (Torres 1998), it is still often the case that bilingual youngsters act as their families’ interpreters (Valdés et al. 2000).

As a nation, the United States — like so many other countries around the world — is not equipped to provide interpreting services for all its language minority inhabitants, be they immigrants or indigenous groups. In Latino communities, for example, the inability to access services because of a language barrier contributes to social inequality. Whenever there are no professional language brokers to facilitate communication, ad hoc mediators step in. So it is not unusual to see non-English speakers walking into a teacher-parent conference or a medical appointment accompanied by a friend or a family member who may be able to help them “figure out” what is going on. As a result of the use of ad hoc interpreters,

regulations and bills have been submitted to prohibit children from interpreting for their parents and/or relatives in healthcare institutions (Yee, Diaz, and Spitzer 2003). Furthermore, the use of untrained interpreters, such as a bilingual janitor or native speaker in a healthcare institution, has been severely criticized (Allen 2000; Cambridge 1999; Marcus 2003) and has sparked a debate over the quality of health care and other services and its accessibility to speakers of non-societal languages in a multilingual society. Given all this, how do bilingual youngsters react? How do they develop a sense of what is required if they are to provide for the communicative needs of language minorities? What do they believe the role of the interpreter is and should be? What factors are at play as they construct their own ideology of a language broker? Do they develop a sense of advocacy? In their attempt to “help out” their own, is neutrality possible? It is imperative to understand the life circumstances and histories of circumstantial bilinguals, since these have implications for how they develop a sense of themselves as interpreters for their families or immediate communities. These questions also affect their perception of the interpreting profession and may shape their own professional ideology if they choose to become professional interpreters.

### **The making of an interpreter**

Professional interpreters receive an education which entails the development of skills (e.g., linguistic, information processing, interpersonal, social, professional) at various different levels (Angelelli 2006; Napier 2006; Sawyer 2004, 2006; Slatyer 2006). Students of interpreting are either elective or circumstantial bilinguals. When joining a translation and/or interpreting course, they vary in their abilities and experiences; some elective bilinguals may be stronger in their linguistic skills, especially in range of registers in both languages, while some circumstantial bilinguals may have an advantage in their interpersonal or social skills, given their affiliation with their linguistic community. In other areas, such as information processing and professional skill areas, both types may be expected to be on an equal footing as circumstantial bilinguals have been found to exhibit skills typical of experienced interpreters (Valdés et al. 2003).

Existing course work aimed at developing professionalism within programs that educate interpreters in institutions of higher education sometimes includes such topics as the interpreter’s role, ethics relevant to the job, certification processes, professional associations’ rules and regulations, etc. (Angelelli 2006). Professionalism also means developing an awareness of one’s own limitations (e.g., declining to take on an assignment for which one does not have the required

knowledge or competence). Students in those courses must also learn about potential conflicts of interest or differences of opinion between themselves and the interlocutors which may color their ability to perform a job. Students should be encouraged to discuss such cases in class, to contextualize new information, and to capitalize on their own experiences.

Since, as stated above, the life experiences of elective and circumstantial bilinguals are not the same, and their levels of familiarity with the topics discussed will also differ, it is possible that students' conceptualization of their roles, responsibilities, etc. will also be affected. These differences need to be accounted for in their education.

## Implications and conclusion

### *Implications for interpreter training*

As stated above, the life experiences of elective and circumstantial bilinguals are not the same. Consequently, their capitalization and contextualization of new knowledge are different and distinctive. What may be new information for an elective bilingual may be conflicting information for a circumstantial bilingual. Teachers of interpreting need to be aware of these differences in perception, especially as these concern differences in expectations and role boundaries. Circumstantial bilinguals who have acted as interpreters for their families have often formed a view of themselves as family advocates and take pride in this role.

In addition, elective bilinguals may be surprised to discover that professional interpreters' responsibilities vary greatly. They may have ways of integrating this with their previous knowledge, particularly since the two perceptions may be at odds. Students will discuss the varying degrees of regulation applied to the different types of interpreting, for instance, how conference, court and medical interpreting are regulated by international, national or state organizations that establish guidelines and codes of ethics for their members. This is not the case for community interpreting, which is likely to be the type of interpreting that circumstantial bilinguals have experienced. The ensuing tension between professional regulations, their work on the ground and their life experiences may prove very challenging to students as they grapple with the construct of linguistic advocacy. In the case of circumstantial bilinguals studying to become interpreters, a conflict may arise as they try to reconcile the role of advocate with their professional code of ethics (i.e., "faithfulness" and transparency). It follows that discussions of choice, agency and role are essential when teaching interpreting to a student population composed of elective and circumstantial bilinguals.



*Implications for teaching bilingual youngsters*

Bilingual youngsters who perform as interpreters are talented individuals. This talent is seldom recognized at the high schools where these bilingual youngsters are enrolled. If programs were created to enhance their special linguistic abilities, they would be able to recognize the value of knowing two or more languages and would learn to appreciate their own interpreting and translating skills, which they have used to help monolinguals whose linguistic needs are not otherwise accommodated. They may or may not consider pursuing studies in translation or interpreting, but at least they will become more educated consumers of T and I services. It seems that such youngsters would greatly benefit from positive attention in the classroom, which might involve encouraging them to speak two languages and assisting them in improving their skills. Such a syllabus would promote their learning experience and help them leverage their gifts and competences in a way that would most likely prove useful to them in the future (Angelelli, Enright and Valdés 2002).

The position taken in developing curricular guidelines for young interpreters in high school (Angelelli et al. 2002) focuses on the development of these youngsters' special linguistic and social abilities rather than on linguistic advocacy. While such programs may prove useful at the elementary school level as well, these particular guidelines focused on the high school level, when many immigrant students are most at risk. It was the position of the research team that students identified by schools as gifted in the area of translation and interpreting should be encouraged to consider careers in which their special language skills will give them an advantage. As students begin to form career goals, they are likelier to form academic goals as well. When bilingual youngsters find an academic space in which to develop their talents as interpreters and translators, they can discuss their roles and responsibilities, as well as their beliefs and values in relation to the tasks they will be performing. This will affect the ideology that they may bring with them to the task of interpreting as adults. Given the complexity of translation and interpreting, these youngsters will benefit from learning about their own potential for performing these two tasks (Bell 1991).

In conclusion, as we continue to witness realities in which societies are not able or not willing to provide for the needs of linguistic minorities, and as we continue to shape interpreters' sense of professionalism and identity, it is imperative to call for further dialogue between researchers, practitioners and linguistic advocates. The importance of language rights "is grounded in the essential role that language plays in human existence, development and dignity" (de Varennes 2000:69). In the state of California, as in many other places in the U.S. and the world, circumstantial bilinguals, particularly youngsters, are aware of discrimination against those who do not speak the national language (Valdes et al. 2003) and

often stand up for the rights of their families and immediate communities. As applied linguists and translator and interpreter researchers and educators, we must support them by playing an active role in “maintaining the diversity of the world we are all responsible for” (Skutnabb-Kangas 1999b: 58 in Phillipson 2000).

## Notes

1. Fishman 2000. Societal language is understood to be the language used by society at large. In the U.S., for example, the societal language is English.
2. In the U.S., there are no degrees granted in community or healthcare interpreting. For further discussion on what constitutes professionalism and the professional interpreter, see Angelelli 2005.

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# **“Boundary work” as a concept for studying professionalization processes in the interpreting field**

Nadja Grbić

“Boundary work” is a concept that was introduced by Thomas Gieryn in the early 1980s in order to study the construction of differences between “us” and “them.” Although it was used in the first instance to study the rhetorical construction of differences between science and non-science, boundary theories have been further developed since then and are now used in various disciplines to focus on a range of topics, including the construction of boundaries between profession and non-profession. In this article I will present the concept of boundary work and outline a research project I have launched to examine the construction of sign language interpreters as an occupational group in Austria.

**Keywords:** boundary work, classification systems, sign language interpreting, professionalization

## **Introduction**

The concept of boundaries and boundary work (boundary setting, maintenance, blurring, bridging, shifting, etc.) has been used in studies spanning a broad spectrum of disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology, social studies of science, organizational studies, and gender studies. The concept focuses on a range of issues concerning the construction of differences between “us” and “them.” The arrangement of boundaries, territories and landmarks is driven by social interests and constructed by means of discourse and so is necessarily contingent. Boundaries differentiate one person or thing from another, surrounding a territory with a mental fence and thereby creating spaces that contain inhabitants who are automatically generalized in some respect. On the one hand, boundary work generates positive feelings of similarity and group membership, while, on the other hand, it constitutes an inherent means of excluding others. In this respect, boundary

work plays a critical role in constructing “identities,” in attaining status, and in determining what we notice and what we ignore, whom we include and whom we exclude. In this sense, boundary work appears to be a fruitful concept to apply to a study of professionalization processes in the translation and interpreting field.

In this article I will first discuss some general problems pertaining to classification and classification systems insofar as the setting of boundaries implies the categorization of events, people and groups. I will proceed from these considerations to present the concept of boundary work before concluding in part three with an outline of the research project I have launched on the construction of sign language interpreters as an occupational group in Austria, a study that proceeds from the assumption that boundaries are often the outcome of professional projects.<sup>1</sup>

### Classifications and classification systems

“To classify is human” — this is how Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star’s (2000) book on classification and its consequences begins. All cultures have produced classifications and classification systems throughout the ages, although we rarely question their social, moral or economic effects. There are of course plenty of instances of classification work and processes that have a formal character and lead to some kind of standardization. Within the realm of our professional lives, such standardized classification systems include classification systems in libraries, scientific classification systems, or, in relation to the special issue of this journal, classification systems pertaining to occupations.<sup>2</sup> In addition to these defined instances of classification, though, ad hoc classifications fill and affect our everyday lives. We differentiate between casual and business clothes, important email to be answered and spam, useful papers to be read and useless ones to be thrown away, smokers and non-smokers, and friends and enemies (see *ibid*: 1–2). We tend to cut the world up unconsciously, without realizing how we classify objects, people, practices, and even time and space. According to Zerubavel (1991:5), we need to carve up the world because “things become meaningful only when placed in some category.” He sees any act of classifying as a creative process, which he describes as “sculpting” mental clusters (Zerubavel 1995:1094), leading to the cognitive tranquillity of an (apparently) well-compartmentalized world (*ibid*: 1095). In classifying the world we make generalizations, which in turn serve as a means of achieving new knowledge. Such acts of classification and generalization can already be observed in the early stages of language acquisition when children in their first naming exercises begin to assign meanings to objects and, in the transition from situational to taxonomic conceptual thinking, sometimes over-generalize (see Aitchison 1998:111–112).

Practitioners and scholars in the translation and interpreting field have produced their own particular classifications and classification systems over the course of time. First of all, we differentiate between translating and interpreting as more or less separate activities, and between translation and interpreting studies as different (sub-)disciplines (see Schäffner 2004); we also attempt to distinguish between diverse interpreting (and translation) types, settings and modes,<sup>3</sup> and to set apart "good" from "bad" translation and interpreting products.<sup>4</sup> We cut up the translation/interpreting map into various practice-related territories, bounding each from other territories, thus also categorizing the people who work in each of the respective fields. We use seemingly unbiased technical categories such as "simultaneous" or "consecutive" interpreting or "conference," "court," "community," and "sign language" interpreting, but we also use a range of social, cultural, moral and economic categories to classify translation and interpreting agents, differentiating for example between freelance and staff interpreters; experts and novices; trained and untrained interpreters; professionals and semi-professionals or amateurs; and paid interpreters and interpreters who work on a voluntary basis.

Research has shown that there is no universal classification system for the simple reason that categories do not exist independently of space and time; rather, they always adjust to social and intellectual developments. This means that classifications and classification systems are contingent. Still, people become accustomed to them in such a way that they seem utterly natural and beyond question. In the preface to *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault quotes a passage from a short story by the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges, "The Analytical Language of John Wilkins," claiming that *The Order of Things* arose from his laughter as he read Borges' text. Borges describes a fictional Chinese encyclopaedia entitled *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge* which presents an "exotic" taxonomy of animals. The celebrated passage reads as follows: "Animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies" (Foucault 2001: xvi). Borges' distortion of classification methods is humorous in its absurdity, but it also evokes an uneasy feeling as it threatens "our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other" (ibid.).

As mentioned above, to classify is human and it seems indeed to be a human need, but it is not an easy endeavour. In the active process of classifying, we may face quite a few technical, moral and ethical problems. Let us first look at some technical problems that might arise. Bowker and Star (2000: 24) are quite right when they argue that "people do not do the ideal job but the doable job." That is why people only include things in their classification systems that they can see or that they wish to see. With regard to translation and interpreting, I would like



to illustrate the problem of divergent perception by presenting three examples of categorical differentiation between translation and interpreting. According to the traditional or layperson's classification, translation is defined as written and interpreting as spoken language transfer. Although it is an oversimplification, this classification has stood the test of time and is still widely used.<sup>5</sup>

One example of a historical classification is the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher's, who was, according to Pöchhacker (2004:54), one of the few pre-twentieth-century authors who wrote about interpreting at some length. Schleiermacher differentiates between translation and interpreting with reference to two different linguistic and thematic spheres: art and scholarship, on the one hand, and business, on the other. He describes translation as an ambitious venture, which must capture and convey the spirit of the language of the original, as well as the author's diction, and compares this to what he describes as the merely mechanical task of interpreting. Thus, he presents translation as something that takes place in a somewhat dignified dimension, while interpreting is an everyday and mechanical or mathematical task (Askani 1997:120–123). Schleiermacher's interpreting category therefore includes not only the "oral" mode but also the translation of many pragmatic texts. In 1968 Kade introduced a less evaluative and more sophisticated classification based on the time factor. For him, interpreting is a form of language transfer in which the source text is presented only once and the target text is produced under time pressure without the possibility of consulting tools or reference works and with little space for correction, whereas the translator is presented the source text in a fixed form, which allows him or her to refer back to it and correct or revise the final product accordingly (Kade 1968).

Another technical problem we may face when doing classification work is the fact that our world is full of ambiguities and composites that challenge the illusion of discrete compartments (Zerubavel 1995:1095). A common solution to this problem is the introduction of residual categories for things you don't know what to do with (Bowker and Star 2000:300–302). In the translation and interpreting field, there are also events that do not fit into our traditional, "normalized" classification of "either translation or interpreting." These are events which include features of both translation and interpreting, such as live subtitling in the theater (see Griesel 2007) or sign language "translation" (see Leneham 2007). Such instances have led to the introduction of the concept of "hybrid" forms and have called into question the traditional classification systems.

The fact that, as mentioned above, people only include things in their classification systems that they can or wish to see can easily lead to moral and ethical problems, a prime example of which is invisibility: "Pushing certain classes and qualities of objects 'into the foreground' necessarily implies the relegation of other categories and qualities to the background" (Bowker and Star 2000:5). As Bowker

and Star (*ibid.*) rightly point out, this is not in itself a bad thing as it is virtually inescapable, but insofar as it is the consequence of an ethical choice, it can have ethical consequences. The inclusion or exclusion of certain objects, events or people in classification systems may not be only a consequence of not seeing them but also the result of a political or ideological decision. In this way classifications are often ideologically charged as becomes clear when we think of the construction of hierarchical classes like “natives” and “foreigners” or the construction of different migrant groups, such as the “genuine” and the “bogus” asylum seeker. A recent example from the interpreting field is the controversial discussion concerning Babels, an activist network of volunteer translators and interpreters whose “radical” activist practices of interpreting in the Social Forum challenged the established role of “real” conference interpreters, questioning the notion that an interpreter can be invisible, neutral or impartial (see Boéri 2008).

As we have seen, the impact of classification work is indisputable and inescapable. Consequently, classifications occupy a particular place in studies of social order (Bowker & Star 2000: 3). However, special interest is typically paid not to the classifications themselves but to the processes and strategies that lead to classifications in a given field.

## Boundaries and boundary work

Metaphors pertaining to maps and landscapes are often used in the investigation of classification and classification systems. As terms such as “field”, “area”, and “road” reveal, the imagery we use to describe our world is very often spatial (Zerubavel 1995: 1094). We divide our world into “cultural spaces” (Gieryn 1999: 10), in the process of which we highlight contrasts, set up mental fences, put some objects at the core, banish others to the margins, and construct walls to keep others out.<sup>6</sup> Such arrangements of space also define the relationships between sets of things, actions and agents (that is, relationships like “nested,” “overlapping,” “neighboring,” “distanced,” to name but a few). Cartographic metaphors are thus widely used throughout the social sciences, a particularly well-known concept being Bourdieu’s “cultural field,” which has in recent years been applied with increasing frequency to translation and interpreting studies, for example, by Sela-Sheffy and Shlesinger (2008) with regard to the status of translators and interpreters as an occupational group in Israel. Foucault (2007: 177) confesses that his “spatial obsession” led him to study the relations between power and knowledge: “Once knowledge can be analyzed in terms of region, domain, implantation, displacement, transposition, one is able to capture the process by which knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates the effects of power” (*ibid.*).

Another spatial metaphor is the “boundary,” which can be seen as a mechanism for the construction and classification of meaning. As Zerubavel (1995:1093f.) puts it, boundaries “play a critical role in the process of constructing identities.” For Michèle Lamont (1993:2), boundaries are “types of lines that men draw when they categorize people.” Traditionally, boundary-work theories have tended to see boundaries as stable demarcation lines with a focus on social closure. They have been used to describe the actions of social groups, serving to restrict entry and to limit the benefits of membership to those within the group, thus extending and establishing their own advantage over “outsiders.” With regard to professionalization processes, “market closure” has been seen as one of the crucial goals of occupational groups, with the aim of establishing a sphere of influence, hoping in this way to acquire status and protect themselves from outsiders, who they perceive as amateurs.

The traditional assumption of stable boundaries and focus on binary oppositions have been increasingly criticized. Today, after a long period of empirical research, symbolic boundaries are seen as socially constructed, complex entities (Heracleous 2004:95) with a strong relational quality, as they both connect and divide people (Lamont 2001:171). They are ambiguous and permeable (Kerosuo 2006:71), negotiated (Heracleous 2004:96) and sometimes disputed, historically contingent, contextually variable and internally inconsistent (Gieryn 1983:792). They not only create places or instances of discontinuity and demarcation (Stafford 1997) but can also be seen as social interfaces (Kerosuo 2006:83f.) and as sites of communication (Bowker and Star 2000:296ff.). Scholarly interest is not, however, concerned with the boundaries themselves but with the processes and strategies that lead to the emergence of boundaries. This is what is referred to as “boundary work,” a concept that was introduced by Thomas F. Gieryn (1983 et passim) who studied the cultural boundaries of science. In his application of boundary theory he described boundary work as: “the discursive attribution of selected qualities to scientists, scientific methods, and scientific claims for the purpose of drawing a rhetorical boundary between science and some less authoritative residual non-science” (Gieryn 1999:4–5).

Research on boundaries and boundary work has gained steadily in importance since the 1960s (Lamont 2001:1). Following Bourdieu, the question of how boundary work affects class, gender and racial inequality has attracted a great deal of interest (ibid:3). The aim of research on boundary work is to understand the role of symbolic resources in generating feelings of similarity and difference, of group membership and of exclusion. Much attention is focused on the dynamics of boundaries, such as how they are constructed, imposed, protected, bridged, undermined, and transformed in order to reach a certain goal, such as the acquisition of a certain status or the monopolization of resources (see Lamont and Molnár 2002:168; Pachucki et al. 2007:331). Generally speaking, boundary work “is

strategic practical action” (Gieryn 1999: 23). It “refers to the strategies that groups and individuals employ and the evaluative criteria they draw upon to construct distinctions between themselves and others” (Anagnostopoulos 2006: 8). Various processes related to boundary work have been studied up to now, among them: the setting of boundaries; the institutionalization of boundaries; boundary negotiation; boundary disputes; boundary maintenance; boundary blurring; boundary spanning; boundary crossing; and boundary shifting.

Research on boundaries and boundary work has been carried out across a wide range of academic disciplines, including sociology, gender studies, anthropology, social psychology, social studies of science, organisational studies, and nursing studies. Research topics include: social and collective identity; class, ethnic and gender inequality; professions, science and knowledge; communities, national identities, and spatial boundaries; health; organisations, institutions and management; taste and aesthetic boundaries, etc. (see Lamont and Molnár 2002, Pachuchki et al. 2007).

With regard to professionalization processes research has been carried out to analyze boundary work strategies between different social groups, addressing issues such as boundaries between professionals and amateurs, between adjacent professions, or between paid and voluntary work within the same occupational segment. In addition to these aspects, intra-professional boundaries have also been studied, as there are also often conflicting interpretations of the same phenomena within occupational groups. A wide range of empirical studies has been undertaken from a boundary-theoretical perspective in the realm of the medical professions, where particular attention has been paid to the setting of boundaries between “expert” and “lay” knowledge, as can be seen in studies on the boundaries between traditional and alternative physicians, or between nurses and physicians. Another major area of research comprises case studies of single professional groups, such as lawyers, social workers or managers, or case studies of aspiring professions, addressing occupations such as dieticians, therapeutic masseurs, housing managers, or funeral directors. Research has proven that boundary work theories are particularly useful for studying a range of different processes in the construction of professions.

## Professions and professionalization

Traditionally, professions have been regarded as a “clearly bounded natural analytical unit emerging from functional specialization” (Lamont and Molnár 2002: 178). The main focus of interest was generally on structure and closure, whereby the world is seen to consist of discrete insular entities (Zerubavel 1995: 1095). Two kinds of explanatory theories tended to dominate the discussion: trait models and

process models. Trait models concentrated on constituent components of “professions” and were used to construct ideal typical “professions,” specifying in advance what constitutes a “true” profession — and what does not (Thurk 2004). Such traits include: formal knowledge; jurisdictional control; professional norms; high status; altruism; common language; credentials; ethical codes; salaried work, etc. (Abbott 1988, Thurk 2004).

Process models, on the other hand, view professionalization as a natural process, whereby groups gradually acquire all the characteristics of true professions, culminating in professional status as a steady end state (Abbott 1988: 4–5). The problem with this approach is the focus on structure, the assumption of a single unidirectional and independent development, the negligence of history before “professionalization,” and a disregard of internal differentiations within professions (Abbott 1995: 18f.). In a nutshell, the main problem of both these approaches is the assumption of essential qualities.

Andrew Abbott (1988) was one of the important scholars in the sociology of professions who shifted the analytical focus from structure to work practices, i.e., the contents of professional life. In contrast to the closure model, he described professions as historically-constructed, open ecological systems, where professions exist in interdependence, resulting in a constantly changing system of professions (Lamont and Molnár 2002: 178). A range of empirical research supports the significance of understanding “profession” as a cultural and social category. According to this view, a “professional” is simply an agent thus categorized, or an agent judged by other agents “to embody the elements of the version of professionalism relevant to them” (Thurk 2004). From this it follows that there cannot be such a thing as one single universal concept of professionalism, rather, that there are multiple professionalisms. The term “professionalization” refers to the process of increasing the application of the term or category “professional” to a particular group or agent. The more individuals or groups use and accept this categorization, the higher the degree of institutionalization of the category in question. To use the term “professional” is, therefore, to perform a classificatory act whereby a profession/not-profession boundary is constructed (*ibid.*). We ought to keep in mind, though, that professionalization is not something that is established once and for all in any monolithic way (Oerton 2004: 545).

Larsen (1977: xvii) described occupations as engaging in a “professional project” whereby they gain a monopoly over a certain area of expertise in order to achieve market control, respectability and social status in the community. The professional project, therefore, cannot be characterized in terms of a list of traits but rather by focusing on the dynamic processes which underpin the strategies that aspiring professional groups adopt in the course of their attempts to professionalize (see Casey and Allen 2004: 397; Oerton 2004: 545).

## Method and research questions

My research project is a study of the construction of the professional field of sign language interpreting in Austria. In my analysis, I will focus on boundaries and boundary work as sensitizing concepts. I proceed from the assumption that, as symbolic boundaries are often the outcome of professional projects, this is the case in the field of sign language interpreting.

When studying boundaries as multiple sites of difference, it is interesting to start at the very beginning, which is to say with the constitution of the professional field as a recognizable entity. In the course of this process, social reality is constructed in ways that seem consistent and reasonable. This means that the construction of the self-contained professional field is contingent upon social, cultural, historical and economic conditions. Likewise, the objects that it claims to know in a "professional" way are not independent of the professional gaze but are constructed by professional practice (Fournier 2000). Over the years, boundaries are drawn over and over again as they are based on past experiences as well as on changes within or outside the professional field (Hernes 2004: 11).

At present, there are 71 certified sign language interpreters working in Austria. They are organized in an Interpreters' Association, which was founded in March 1998.<sup>7</sup> The process of the construction of the professional field began approximately ten years earlier, in 1989, when two social workers who were appointed as sign language interpreters and used to meet every now and then decided to found an open society of social workers and interpreters for the deaf. The purpose of this society was to get to know colleagues, to exchange information and to discuss problems. In 1990, the Department of Translation Studies at the University of Graz (Institut für Theoretische und Angewandte Translationswissenschaft, ITAT) organized the first conference on sign language research in Austria. At that time, contact was established between the society and the university and the interpreters worked together for the first time as a team in a conference setting. As a consequence, the ITAT was asked to organize a few further training workshops for the interpreters, which took place between 1992 and 1994.

From February 1997 to March 1998 24 sign language interpreters attended a one-year part-time continuing education program at the ITAT, which was organized under the auspices of a European Union project with trainers from Austria as well as from partner institutions in other European countries. Having completed this course, the 24 graduates founded the Austrian Sign Language Interpreters' Association, ÖGSDV (Österreichischer GebärdensprachdolmetscherInnen-Verband). Since November 1998, the ÖGSDV has offered accreditation examinations for sign language interpreters twice a year. 105 people took the exam before the national examining board between November 1998 and November 2008. 62 passed

and 43 failed. As a result of negotiations with the Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs, official guidelines were published in January 2000 making it mandatory for local authorities in charge of interpreter facilitation to commission only sign language interpreters who had passed the accreditation examination. In the autumn of 2002, a five-year full-time sign language interpreter-training program was implemented at the University of Graz and in 2003 the Deaf Association of Upper Austria introduced their own private three-year full-time training program. Since 2008, it has been mandatory for all prospective sign language interpreters to complete a training course before taking the accreditation examination.

As mentioned above, there are currently 71 certified sign language interpreters working in Austria. The group is small but fairly heterogeneous, consisting of:

- Interpreters who were among the first to gather together as a group at the end of the 1980s and who have been working as interpreters for more than 30 years now, as well as novices who have just entered into professional life
- Interpreters who already interpreted for their deaf parents as children (so called CODAs — children of deaf adults) and people who learned sign language as adults
- Interpreters who have had no interpreter training at all, interpreters who have completed short part-time training courses or attended workshops, and interpreters who studied sign language interpreting at the university level
- Interpreters who have an academic qualification in another field (such as social work or foreign languages) and interpreters with low levels of educational qualification

In addition to the interpreters who are organized as members of the association, there are also interpreters who resigned from the association or who were excluded for a number of different reasons. Furthermore, there are interpreters who never had any intention of joining the association but nonetheless work as interpreters, e.g., in regions with acute interpreter shortages or in situations where hearing or deaf people refrain from commissioning certified sign language interpreters.

The central question of my research project is: What happens in the process of constructing sign language interpreting as a profession in Austria? Questions following from this include: What are the basic social processes involved? How do the processes emerge and how do the interpreters' actions construct them? Which of these processes are fundamental and which are marginal? What meanings do different interpreters attribute to the processes? When and how do these meanings change? (see Charmaz 2006: 20)



I proceed from the assumption that sign language interpreters in Austria used and still use — consciously or not — strategies and techniques pertaining to boundary work in the process of constructing their professional field. This means that I am looking for certain concepts and processes in my data, using boundaries and boundary work as "sensitizing concepts," a notion that originates from Herbert Blumer, who in the mid-1950s used the term sensitizing concept to provide guidance in approaching empirical data. Sensitizing concepts draw attention to important features of social interaction and sensitize the analytical approach to certain questions (see Charmaz 2006: 14). My focus is not primarily on factual information regarding chronologies, events, settings, etc. This information is of course a valuable by-product, but my focus is on the interpreters' reconstruction of their own history. I am interested in those views, feelings, assumptions, practices and situations in their working lives that interpreters remember and that therefore become meaningful to the process of constructing the profession, as well as being of consequence to their daily practice.

I began to collect data in February 2009. When the data collection is completed, the data will consist of written documents and interview transcripts. I chose to use two kinds of data as I believe they will complement each other in a particularly useful way, enriching the data and providing me with a solid basis on which to construct my analysis. The extant documents can provide insights into historical processes and meanings attributed to them by the interpreters at a certain point in time, while the interviews can bring to light those processes that are still kept in mind as well as those that are relevant to the protagonists now and therefore meaningful for the construction of the profession. Among the extant texts I will use as data are organizational documents, such as minutes, reports, workshop programs, scripts of speeches, faxes and letters, as well as personal documents, including letters, faxes and notes. In addition, I am conducting a series of interviews with interpreters, attempting to represent a cross-section of the heterogeneous population of sign language interpreters in Austria as described above while also including the "renegades" and "heretics" in and around the interpreting community.

My methodology consists of a qualitative study based on Grounded Theory. The Grounded Theory Method was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and "consist[s] of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories grounded in the data themselves" (Charmaz 2006: 2). This means that the data themselves are the focus in an inductive process that encourages the use of exploration and investigation to generate hypotheses and theoretical constructs, rather than deducing testable hypotheses from existing theories (ibid:4). The Grounded Theory approach is very useful for analyzing processes that lead to change, resulting in an abstract theoretical understanding — a



grounded theory — of the processes under investigation (ibid.:4). An important issue in Grounded Theory is the “constant comparative method,” which means that the researcher is constantly looking for similarities and differences in the data and making comparisons in order to establish analytical distinctions throughout the entire course of the research process (ibid:5, 54). I have divided my data collection and coding process into two phases. In the initial phase I will code the extant texts as well as the transcripts of intense and detailed interviews with three or four interpreters from rather different professional backgrounds. This initial coding will lead to a number of hypotheses that will inform the construction of new, more focused interview questions for the second phase of interviews.

Some of the central questions I plan to address in my study include:

- How do the agents in question construct their group(s) and how can the perceived similarities and/or differences be explained?
- What classificatory acts are performed and what are the shared objectives behind them?
- Where are boundaries established between interpreters and other professions, between interpreters and clients, and between different categories of interpreters?
- When, in the making of the profession, do these boundaries emerge?
- What types of boundary do the data illustrate? Are they cultural, socioeconomic, moral, or emotional boundaries? Or are there entirely other boundaries?
- Which strategies are used to construct them? For example, are rituals an essential part of boundary setting?
- How and why are boundaries maintained, blurred, shifted, crossed or dissolved in the course of time?
- Which boundaries are particularly salient? Which are temporary and which are more durable? Which are permeable and which are impregnable?
- When do they focus on exclusion, and when do they allow for hybridization processes or new forms of categorization?
- Under which conditions can the properties of boundaries be changed?
- Who draws the boundaries for whom and against whom? Who are the players and stakeholders?
- What is the repertoire of qualities attributed to ‘professionalism’ during the professionalization process?

These issues form the basis of my research project, which should provide new perspectives with regard to boundaries and their role in the professionalization process of Austrian sign language interpreters, which in turn should indicate further-reaching implications for the study of professional “identities” in our field in a broader sense.

## Notes

1. The term "professional project" has been introduced by Larsen (1977). She described it as systematic attempt by occupational groups to acquire a monopoly in the market as well as status and collective upward mobility in the social order.
2. The current version of the *International Standard Classification of Occupations* (ISCO-88) defines four levels of aggregation, comprising 10 major groups, 28 sub-major groups, 116 minor groups and 390 unit groups (see Elias and Burch 1994). In this classification system, translators and interpreters are categorized in major group 2, "professionals," sub-major group 24, "other professionals," minor group 244, "social science and related professionals," and unit group 2444, "philologists, translators and interpreters."
3. See Alexieva 1997 and Nord 1997; on the problems of interpreting categories, see Grbić and Pöllabauer 2006; for a metadiscussion of translation types, see Halverson 2000 and Prunč 2004.
4. See Grbić 2008 on the construction of interpreting quality.
5. Although the Wikipedia article on interpreting and translation also mentions additional differentiating features, the following notion still occupies a prominent place in the definition: "Despite being used interchangeably, interpretation and translation are not synonymous, but refer, respectively, to the spoken and written transference of meaning between two languages" (Wikipedia contributors 2009).
6. Interestingly, the etymologies of both terminology and hermeneutics probably go back to the idea of fields and boundaries, *terminus* meaning boundary stone in Latin and *herma* boundary stone in Greek (see Encyclopedia Britannica 2005).
7. The following information originates from personal data and from a first rough analysis of written documents provided by some sign language interpreters.

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## The task of the interpreter in the struggle of the other for empowerment

Mythical utopia or sine qua non of professionalism?

Şebnem Bahadır

Interpreters perceive, listen, see and speak in the name of the Other, both in the language of the symbolically and/or practically oppressed Other and in the language of the oppressor. Yet in doing so, they paradoxically use their own voice and language. As there can be no neutral part in mis/communication and as there is no objective way of perceiving, analyzing, and processing information and emotions, professional interpreters must position themselves. Numerous examples from situations where interpreters act as intermediaries between the dominating and violating agents of societies/states and migrants, refugees, and members of minoritized and oppressed communities illustrate the challenges involved in simultaneously representing and mediating the speech of the Other. In settings like detention camps, asylum seekers' sanctuaries, refugee camps, and prisons where asylum seekers are kept under custody before deportation, as well as in occupied territories and areas of military conflict, the interpreter is faced with the responsibility of serving as the "expert" of the in-between. Interpreters play a participant role in the interplay of power as an active performer. Their gaze disrupts and their voice intervenes. Thus, I argue that, as an important pillar of professionalism, interpreters must be sensitized and trained to cope with the dangers and opportunities of their in-between position and of their status as the third party to a communicative act. Interpreters should be trained to reflect critically and honestly on their involvement as participant observers.

**Keywords:** ethics of interpreting, representation via interpreting, professionalism, empowerment, interpreter as third person, interpreter as participant observer, body, gaze and voice of the interpreter

## The task

Let us begin with a simplistic definition of the interpreter as one who ensures that individuals who do not speak the same language are able to communicate with one other. Interpreters are service providers for their fellow human beings, similar to other professionals who provide services to the community, such as teachers, social workers, and health care professionals, whose work is associated with a certain degree of humanitarianism. However, there is a moral uncertainty and ambiguity in regard to the interpreter. A closer look at the professionalization of interpreting, with a particular emphasis on the second half of the twentieth century, reveals that a certain “technicist” and “mechanicist” approach seems to have influenced the development of interpreting from an occupation associated with charity to a quantifiable, transparent and certified profession (for a detailed survey, see Pöchhacker 2000, 2004). The professionalization of conference interpreting represents a success story in eradicating the emotional, overly human(itarian) elements of this service and consequently in achieving the routinization and standardization of professional activity. However, since the end of the 1980s the image of interpreting as some kind of linguistic social work and of the interpreter as a humanitarian service-provider has been resurrected. The once stigmatized view of the interpreter as helping others by speaking on their behalf and in the language the others do not speak again attached itself to the occupation. The already professionalized field of conference interpreting now had to confront its alter ego: community interpreting.

One major factor that challenges the claim for controllable specialist knowledge and transparent interlingual transfer operations within the professionalization movement of interpreting is the client in community settings. While the conference interpreter is expected to establish communication between so-called experts, the community interpreter becomes the voice of the accused or oppressed, the defendant, the incarcerated, the minority speaker, the migrant, the asylum seeker, and the refugee, among many others. When interpreting for the “subaltern” (see Spivak 1988, 1990), who are speechless either because they are denied the right to speak or are incapable of speaking for themselves, the interpreter’s job description becomes extremely vague and complex. The dividing line between advocacy and interpreting is blurred. In direct response and in contrast to the elitist expert spheres of conference interpreting, an alternative attitude toward interpreting has arisen in migrant, minority and refugee settings which favors and cultivates metaphorical labels, such as language broker, communication facilitator and cultural go-between (see Wadensjö 1998, Pöllabauer 2005, Angelelli 2004a and 2004b; see also the rationale of projects like *SpraKuM — Qualifizierung von AsylbewerberInnen zu Sprach- und KulturmittlerInnen* [Qualification of Asylum

*Applicants as Linguistic and Cultural Mediators*], discussed in Bahadır 2007: 228–234). In these contexts, current discussions of the right to speak one's mother tongue (see the initiative "Linguistic Rights" at <http://www.linguistic-rights.org/> and Skutnabb-Kangas 2008) force us to consider and debate the right to request a translation/interpretation into one's mother tongue, the right to be translated/interpreted into another (more often, the dominant) language, and the right to refuse these translational and transformational acts (see Dizdar 2006: 331–340).

Translation and interpreting are now more closely connected with the rights of certain language speakers and the obligations imposed upon the speakers of other languages. In this discussion, we must scrutinize the legal background, the surrounding political scenarios, ideological coloring and the social constraints in which the acts of interpreting are embedded.<sup>1</sup> Language is a powerful weapon which speakers use to exert power, dominate, appease, and manipulate. (Self-) Representation, i.e., speaking for a community or for oneself, and unification, that is, standing up as a community, is only possible by means of a common language. The characterization of the subaltern as speechless and unspeakable, in other words, as lacking any political, social or cultural representation, raises significant questions for the interpreter: Does interpreting bring about empowerment for the subaltern? Does the subaltern obtain a voice through interpretation? Can an interpreter arrogate the role of spokesperson for the subaltern to herself? Can she claim to understand and transfer the needs of the speechless?

Professionalism is closely connected to issues of power and control. Although at first sight it seems logical that members of an aspiring occupational group should strive to control their "area" and to define the rules of the game by means of their definitions, denominations, boundaries, and criteria for both exclusion and inclusion, this aim is very difficult to realize in the case of occupations like interpreting. Interpreting in the real world continuously undermines attempts to fix and consolidate its boundaries. The normalizing aspect of professionalization denies the interpreter the flexibility required for adapting to every new situation into which she enters, or rather intrudes, when performing her task (see Bahadır 2007, esp. 213–248, for a defense of the necessity of uncertainty and ambiguity in the formation of a new ethical stance toward interpreting, based on Zygmunt Bauman's approach to postmodern ethics, as elaborated in Bauman 1996, 1997, 2000).

The problem of uncertainty, which is seen in the discussion of mental health care professionals, has striking parallels with the dilemmas within the profession of the interpreter: "What are they doing? Are they concerned with ameliorating distress or with controlling deviant behaviour (or both)? In whose interest do they work — that of themselves, their clients, the general public, the state, patriarchy? What role does power play in their operations? Are they impartial, benign



practitioners or partisan oppressive enforcers of social conformity, deriving their role from wider inequalities of power (based on race, class, gender)? Do they crush individuality or celebrate and construct it?” (Pilgrim and Rogers 1999: 115). Interpreters can be seen to oscillate between mythical/mystical and pragmatic role definitions on their way to professionalism. Such uncertainty and ambiguity present a cause for concern: inertia. If too many factors are to be taken into consideration and no reliable standard/solution can be agreed upon at any stage of the activity, interpreters and clients alike might fall into weariness and paralysis. In most situations, especially those involving crises, conflict and distress, interpreters do not have the luxury of being phlegmatic and therefore refraining from questioning. The apparent power imbalance in these situations legitimizes the interpreter to stand up for both her own rights and those denied to the speechless individual for whom she interprets.

### The third person<sup>2</sup>

Interpreters are third parties in the sense in which Simmel uses the concept in his treatise on the stranger and in his reflections on the formation of social groups (Simmel 1999 [1908]: 764–771; see also Bahadır 2007: 157–165). For Simmel, the emergence of a third person, or the movement from a dyad to a triad, opens up new possibilities both for dissolution and consolidation, for conflict as well as for appeasement. From the onset, Simmel assigns the third person the task of “*der Unparteiische und der Vermittler*” (the impartial one and the mediator) (Simmel 1999 [1908]: 125). I will not discuss the problematic label “*der Unparteiische*” (the impartial one) here. It shall suffice for my current aim to pinpoint that Simmel uses “impartiality” and also “objectivity” differently from the way writers of many ethical codes of interpreting do. What is of importance here is that with the entrance of this third person, a group emerges, which is a much more stable social form. In this way, interpreters acting as third parties take on the task of the intermediary “expert” with the potential to consolidate or weaken, or at any rate to influence and shape, the social form of the triad. They find themselves exactly in this position when working in settings such as detention camps, asylum seekers’ shelters, refugee camps, centers where asylum seekers are held in custody prior to deportation, occupied territories, and in areas of military conflict. This standing in-between can be taken as a general trait of any type of interpretation.

However, unlike Simmel’s third person, who is always an agent, an active player in the game of the triad, interpreters have to tolerate the schizophrenic situation in which they are expected to be there and not there at the same time, and in addition to that, to be there (and not there) for all parties involved. They are perceived

and recognized not as the (wo)man in the middle, but rather as the (wo)man taking the side of one or the other. But this “multiphrenic” state of expectations and postulations of the interpreter’s surroundings can also be observed in the self-positioning of the interpreter. The interpreter herself immediately experiences this irresolvable paradox of representation in her body — not only in her mind — and beyond the confines of her physical form, in her emotional world. The interpreter perceives, listens, sees and speaks in the name of the other, but in both the language of the symbolically and/or practically oppressed Other and the language of the oppressor. As there can be no neutral part in mis/communication and as there is no objective way of perceiving, analyzing, and processing information and emotions (see Vermeer 1996, 2006), the professional interpreter has to position herself. Open and courageous positioning is vital because interpreters mostly suffer from burnout or “helper syndrome” when they do not reflect critically and honestly on their involvement as “participant observers” with human(e) qualities in these contexts.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, I maintain the view that an important pillar for the professionalism of modern day interpreters is that they be made aware and trained for the consequences of their in-between position and their status as third party to a communication. At the same time, interpreters and clients alike have to understand that this third position is the only professional status for interpreters to adopt. This in-between position, that is, the third-party position, is one which should be openly and resolutely articulated by practitioners, instructors and researchers in the field of interpreting. As soon as the interpreter enters the dyad, the given social entity is transformed into a triad. This process thereby fundamentally and irrevocably changes the relationship of the two original interaction partners.

### The paradox

Professionalism in interpreting must inculcate in interpreters an awareness of the intrinsic paradox of the simultaneous and/or consecutive existence of the visibility and invisibility principle in their work.<sup>4</sup> Depending on the ruling political/ideological frames and power politics, interpreters as bodies (that is, not just their speech, but their performance in particular, i.e., their voices and their bodies) are applauded, honored, respected and at the same time or sometime after, neglected, forgotten, suppressed, or masked. When convenient, they are either made invisible or visible. But they are not only subject to forces from the outside working upon them; they themselves sometimes choose one strategy or another in order to hide, to protect themselves, or to reassure both themselves and others that nothing (bad) has happened to the original constellation after or through the act of interpreting.

There is a general uneasiness and resistance to the interpreter's position as a third-party figure. The ideal of a transparent interpreting operation seems to haunt all three parties in the triad formation, but in the end, a very pragmatic dimension of this relationship requires acceptance of the fact that all interpreters are bodily present. They are working as bodies. The body of the interpreter, the spatial extension of herself, even if it is only her voice penetrating through the air, makes it impossible to deny her existence and her presence. Interpreters work, for example, in scenarios set against the background of on-going military and civilian conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Israel, Sudan, and South-East Turkey, but are also employed in Western countries that welcome or turn away migrants emanating from these turbulent zones who may be seeking asylum.<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, these interpreters' voices act as a voice for the migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and members of oppressed and tortured minorities, of whole communities in occupied areas and of conflicting groups in war zones; they are the voice of human beings who are perceived as voiceless entities. On the other hand, we must also look to the interpreters' commissioner, who in most cases is the occupier, the oppressor, the (neo)colonizer, or at least the economically, culturally and/or militarily dominant party in the triad. From this perspective, the speechlessness that characterizes these others is a metaphor for the deprivation of their existential rights.

In most cases, this total speechlessness should not be understood concretely and directly. People held in detention camps, refugee camps, in custody, and in prisons cannot truly improve their status or become empowered by way of interpreting. They are not able to negate their state of deprivation and their structural/political deficiency when they start to "speak" in English, Hebrew, French, and Turkish with those in power, either on their own or via an interpreter. The Other here is a status and a position predominantly assigned to persons as a result of their personal, spatial and political circumstances. Therefore, although in ethnical and/or linguistic terms, an Arabic interpreter who is the descendant of Arab immigrants to the US might seem capable of identifying with an Iraqi person held in detention, these ties do not automatically produce a relationship of trust, which is the basis for authentic communication and cooperation. Interpreters need to ensure the trust of both sides in order to carry out their role in the social dramas in which they participate (see Turner 1995; Bahadır 2007, 2008, and forthcoming). They are spurred on by ethical deliberation, which stresses that the highest principle in their profession is enabling, establishing, supporting, and even preserving communication, which requires the trust of both parties. But if the interpreter is an Iraqi or Afghan local working for the occupational forces, wearing the uniform of the occupying army, or a second generation Kurdish immigrant assigned by the German police holding an illegal Kurdish asylum-seeker in custody before

deportation, then the situation becomes even more complicated. Many local interpreters have recounted their experiences in the press, complaining about the stress caused by the contradiction which exists between wanting to hide, conceal, not talk about their job, trying to be as invisible as possible, and the fact that they are proud of their occupation and would like to talk freely about it.<sup>6</sup>

The positioning of the interpreter engenders an ethical dilemma, for example, when s/he is assigned as an interpreter for the police during a raid on the home of an accused or in spaces where suspected criminals are pursued, apprehended and interrogated. As to the positioning and the solidarity-building process of the interpreter's task, the wiretapping and interpreting of telephone calls of individuals under observation leads to a psychological dilemma for the interpreter similar to the one in conflict zones outside the Western world. When the interpreter works in a security forces office, largely shoulder to shoulder with police officers, the physical proximity to those in power will almost inevitably lead to the interpreter identifying with the police and not with the Other.

The stage of interpreting and the interpreting enactments (see Bahadır forthcoming) which I concentrate on here are characterized by interpreter-positioning dynamics in which the interpreter-actor is both detached and involved, simultaneously or with a minimal time delay, and thus, in a rather Brechtian sense of enactment, is both an insider and outsider to her role of intercultural mediator for one interaction partner or the other (see Schechner 1985, 2003). Total alienation is the basic dynamic in these interpreting situations. The US/British/German army expects loyalty, understanding and mediation from the interpreter in neo-colonial intervention zones. This is not very different from the situation of the interpreter-clerk or interpreter-native informant under British or French colonial rule (see Asad 1975; Cronin 2002). Interpreters appear as native local guides and mediators, as collaborators, or even as traitors — at least in the eyes of the Other. For the invading force, the Other is very concretely the enemy, the disturbing, insurgent, resistant human factor in the occupied and thus “appeased” area. Therefore, the Other cannot demand too much from the interpreting, that is, she is not really asked about her expectations of this interpreter-mediated interaction. At the same time, the interpreter often belongs, or at some period of her life belonged, to the same community as the Other. Thus, like Simmel's stranger, the interpreter is both the Other and not, both insider and outsider (see Simmel 1999 [1908]: 766–767). Not so much through language and cultural competency as through the assignment's physical proximity, the interpreter becomes a member of the British army, for example, or of the German police, or the “companion” of a German social worker bursting into the home of a Turkish family to take their child away because the neighbor has informed the police that the Turkish father beats his children.

This double bind, however, is specific to the interpreter, irrespective of the area, modus, and interpreting technique. Given this, interpreting per se is an ethical problem; it represents a severe case of assumed representation and representability. But, primarily, the interpreter is one being, one person, incapable for the most part of splitting herself into two completely different personalities and of acting as two different interpreters for two parties. She cannot be wiped out as the body, as the one body which impinges on the space of the Other with the language of the Other, whether masked or not, wearing a uniform or not. The interpreter inscribes herself both in the text of the dominant and in that of the Other. She articulates both texts with her voice. But when it comes to the embodiment of the two (or more) texts through spatial and temporal relations, the interpreter's proximity to the intruder, i.e., if she arrives with the intruder, plays a decisive role.

### The voice

The interpreter intrudes upon the space of the Other, not least with her voice. The voice of the interpreter penetrates into the speechlessness of the Other in the physical sense of the word. A third voice adds to the situation and this third voice claims to replace or rather (re)create the voice of the Other. If only with her voice, the interpreter intersects an intimate communicative relationship. For Simmel, duality, unlike the social form of three, is characterized by intimacy and exclusivity (Simmel 1999 [1908]:104). This intimacy is destroyed by the physical presence of the Third, of which the most reduced and withdrawn remainder is the voice. Here again we face the paradox: The non-acceptance of the undeniable physical presence of the interpreter leads to the great myth of the impartial, neutral, de-personalized, non-disturbing, thus invisible interpreter. On the one hand, we have the spatial expansion of the interpreter as a body, a palpable, tangible, audible, and visible entity. This body cannot be hidden, forgotten or wiped out in situations such as when the soldier of an army occupying the territory of another community, people or country and a member of this occupied community mis/communicate via the interpreter.

The specific paradox concerning the role of the interpreter in communication is multiplied and extended in situations of extreme and seemingly insurmountable power imbalance. The interpreter is mostly perceived as representing both one's own voice and that of the Other. For the army representative, the interpreter is "his interpreter," an instrument, his handmaid, with the potential to represent "him." In the case of the symbolically or actually oppressed Other, the interpreter per se could take on the role of comrade-in-arms, sympathizer, facilitator, middleman,

conciliator, or intermediary. Yet the bodily positioning of the interpreter dictates that the loyalty relationship is clearly with the intruder and the more powerful. Still, the interpreter is never completely safe. As soon as the communication runs too smoothly or breaks down, i.e., it does not proceed the way it was foreseen, expected or planned by the interaction partner in power, the interpreter is perceived differently in the eyes of the client/commissioner. The immense ethical burden put upon the interpreter's shoulders as the "representative of this/that person/group/community/organization/country/culture" is perverted and the a priori postulated competence of the interpreter to represent simultaneously all parties is questioned because deep down every party wants the interpreter to be his/her own interpreter. These conflicting expectations placed on the interpreter are highly problematic.

Here we must return to the questions addressed earlier: How can this interpreter-body be a mere representation of another body and this interpreter-voice be a mere channel for other voices? Can another body or the body of the Other be represented? Can a voice replace another or the voice of the Other? If we look to the field of interpreting with a dismantling gaze, we will see many interactions in which the third voice of the interpreter takes part in the communication and the third body positions herself within it. The interpreter plays a participant role in the interplay of power. Being a participant observer clearly engenders involvement (see Bahadır 2007, forthcoming). Strategies of assimilation and appropriation by the powerful (or the Other) call for strategies of resistance from the interpreter if she is not to succumb to the pressure. The interpreters who feel uneasy vis-à-vis their absorption into intricate mechanisms of oppression and discrimination must either resign or act. Those who act take a stance, and take on the burden of their articulations. Because interpreters are not panes of glass or photocopy machines, they must at some point break with the ideal of the body-less voice.<sup>7</sup> Acting as the voice of the voice-less is the first step toward becoming aware of one's own voice.

### **The promise, the profession**

Acts of interpreting and the notion of the interpreter as actor point out that the pillar on which the professionalism of the interpreter rests is the "promise" to interpret for a another person. In the final part of this article, I wish to draw upon a perspective put forward by Dizdar on the basis of Derrida's writings (see Dizdar 2006, 2009). Within a deconstructionist approach to translation ethics, the promise is a characteristic of the act of translating, "the point where within the conditioned and conditioning context of his/her profession, she/he professes in the sense of making an oath (Derrida 2001b). This promise is the translator's dual

response both to the text she/he reads and to the reader who asks for his/her mediation" (Dizdar 2009: 98). I would like to highlight this notion of the promise in the interpreter's concrete mode of working.

Whether interpreting entails the transformation of a message, a style, a word, a posture, or an attitude, or whether this act of interpreting is capable of transferring and transforming anything at all is of secondary importance for our purpose here. First, there is the "promise" the interpreter makes whenever she opens her mouth. "Each time I open my mouth, each time I speak or write, I promise" says Derrida (1998: 67) in *The Monolingualism of the Other*. The moment the interpreter starts to interpret, she turns into the monolingual figure described by Derrida — at least for the person for whom she interprets. Although the interpreter is the one speaking several languages, acting in several cultures, moving in and out of these cultures, she is at the same time the one in possession of just one language, the language for and of the person for whom she interprets. By speaking in the language of the one for whom she interprets, the interpreter promises this person that she is the one and only other person speaking this language in a situation where the interaction partner is speaking another language.

Derrida continues by stressing that the perception of the monolingualism of the Other happens outside her will: "Whether I like it or not: here the fatal precipitation of the promise must be dissociated from the values of the will, intention or the meaning-to-say that are reasonably attached to it. The performative of this promise is not one speech act among others. It is implied by any other performative, and this promise heralds the uniqueness of a language to come" (ibid). Here the monolingual Other can be used as a metaphor for the interpreter. Whatever the rational expectations of the professional community from the interpreter or the interpreter's self-presentation and positioning might be, the disabled and disempowered client will (wish to) perceive this promise: The interpreter has to be her interpreter, speaking and carrying the heavy load of only her language. The interpreter speaks at least two languages in a professional environment, but for the person to whom the interpreter lends her voice, there is only *one* language. The interpreter, as perceived by all the parties for whom she interprets, speaks the "still unheard-of language," mentioned by Derrida. Even if people speak and write in several languages simultaneously or consecutively, they have the "absolute idiom" in mind, Derrida argues. Interpreting for a previously speechless person evokes the statement that the interpreter promises a language which then "at once precedes all language, summons all speech and already belongs to each language as it does to all speech" (ibid). The ethical dilemma of representation is based on this "as-if" disposition of interpreting (see Schechner 1985).

We can refer to Derrida's description of the monolanguage of the Other when considering the alienating situation of interpreting as an enactment of the as-if condition. At the same time, the interpreter's claim to representation tears down any as-if façade. Through the performative act of the interpreter, articulating that she speaks for and represents a person, she simultaneously introduces and confronts the impossibility of this naïve and dangerous undertaking. However, the interpreter does not have any other option than to embrace the representational task: "It is not possible to speak outside this promise that gives a language, the uniqueness of the idiom, but only by promising to give it" (Derrida 1998:68). From the point of view of professionalism, it is very important to stay awake, that is, sensitive, critical, and ready for every eventuality, because the interpreter must work in this space of the as-if, assigned to speak for another, performing the act of speaking that represents the other, and at the same time never really capable of speaking in the name of another.

Thus her professionalism is to profess that she is an interpreter. I would like to use "profess" here the way Derrida interprets this verb, i.e., to stress the commitment to her performance as interpreter:

This word "profess" of Latin origin (*profiteor, fessus sum, eri; pro et fateor*, which means to speak, from which also comes fable and thus a certain "as if") means, in French as in English, *to declare openly, to declare publicly*. [...] The declaration of the one who professes is a *performative* declaration in some way. It pledges like an act of sworn faith, an oath, a testimony, a manifestation, an attestation, or a promise, a commitment. To profess is to make a pledge while committing one's responsibility. (Derrida 2001:35–36)

To conclude, the gaze of the interpreter disrupts. The voice of the interpreter intervenes. The interpreter is obliged to become conscious of the distortions of what she perceives, observes, hears, says and writes. So the primary ethical principle for her is to take on the responsibility for the promise that cannot be kept. As Dizdar argues, "The possibility of perversion, with the implication that the promise might not be kept, is a condition of translation" (2009:98). This is unavoidable and has to be accepted. It also means that the power of the interpreter's gaze must be relativized and questioned continually. The interpreter cannot control her gaze or voice permanently, something Dizdar describes as the "second source of possible perversion: the doubling of the promise, the impossibility of total control over one's decision" (2009:98).

Interpreting must be taken as a performance in which at least three parties are interwoven and intertwined. As in cultural anthropology, the time is ripe for studies on interpreting to experience a performative turn. Such an approach would see



all interpreter and interpreting actions as rituals and enactments and consider the different layers of professional identity as roles within these social dramas, to use Turner's terminology (see Turner 1974). At the heart of this approach lies the conviction that we are all "performing animals" and that "performance" is pivotal for the survival, fixation and renewal or (re)creation of rituals, institutions and human relationships. Culture and performance, and therefore identity and performance, are "inextricably connected and mutually formative" (Madison 2005: 150). Memories and emotions play as important a role as does rationally-based information in this engaged professional action. The sensitivity and awareness of the body must also be taken into account. The filters we apply to our perceptions, observations and experiences are to a large extent physical and involve our most basic reactions to warmth, cold, smell, taste, touch, sound, hunger and thirst, physical and mental pain, bereavement, pity, sorrow or happiness. These reactions influence performance and performability just as much as deficient expert knowledge or the lack of a professional interpreting technique.

But how can we expect an interpreter to be aware of the perils and potentials of the body, to be critical but self-confident vis-à-vis her own voice and attentive towards the other voices in and around herself to the extent that she is a product of widespread picture-frame-stage-like unidirectional and rationally-centered academic training, mostly developed on the basis of similarly reductionist research on interpreting? And how can we expect the interpreter to be critical and activist if the majority of instructors of interpreting do not display any of these traits? So we must begin there: The interpreter trainer must also profess. The interpreter trainer must be as conscious, committed, and thus as vulnerable as the interpreter and the interpreting researcher. In a new interpreting pedagogy, the performative context of the training situation must be foregrounded (see Bahadır 2007, 2008, and forthcoming). For the interpreter, the interpreting researcher and the interpreter trainer, the nexus and the limen at the stage of linking body to brain is the voice. So the voice of all three must be heard, loudly and publicly:

"To make profession of" is to declare out loud what one is, what one believes, what one wants to be, while asking another to take one's word and believe this declaration. I insist on this performative value of the declaration that professes while promising. (Derrida 2001: 35–36)

I want to insist on a professional identity for the interpreter, interpreting researcher and interpreter trainer that is based on the Derridean profession. Such an identity would be performative, constructing the interpreter as participatory and active, articulate and committed — a voice that is heard and a body that is seen.

## Endnotes

1. Together with Dilek Dizdar, professor of translation studies at the Faculty of Linguistics, Cultural Studies and Translation Studies at the University of Mainz, and in cooperation with Jens Kertscher and Dirk Hommrich, two researchers in political philosophy and the philosophy of law from the Institute of Culture Research, Heidelberg, we are currently designing an interdisciplinary and international project with the title "Translation und Recht" ["Translation and Law /Rights"] to investigate the legal, political and ideological frameworks of the right/obligation to translate/interpret, the right to be translated/interpreted and to refuse translation/interpretation. We will be working together with scholars from the areas of Legal Studies and Cultural Studies. As our project aims to bring scholars and practitioners from different regions of Europe, and especially the Mediterranean region, together, we are in touch with both colleagues in different disciplines and translators/interpreters in Palestine, Israel and Turkey.
2. The discussion of translation happening in a third space and having a third-party position is not new in translation studies. Scholars like Wolf (2000) and Bachmann-Medick (1997) draw mainly from Bhabha's deliberations on the "culture's in-between" and the "third space" (1994, 1996). Dizdar (2006, 2009) approaches the third-party position of translation from a philosophical perspective, based on Derrida's ethics of deconstruction. There are significant intersections between the above-mentioned translation scholars' work and my re-reading of Simmel, whose sociology was not postcolonial, postmodern or poststructuralist. Still, my use of the concept of the "third person" has a rather more pragmatic, subject- and action-oriented purpose, especially with interpreting pedagogy in mind.
3. Studies on interpreting in therapeutic settings, in interactions with tortured persons or in the context of natural disasters reveal that the "invisibility principle" might seem to protect the interpreter during the interpreting situation itself, but afterward or in the follow-up sessions, the body of the interpreter "reacts" to the immense strain and pressure (see for example Haenel 1997; Knoll and Röder 1998; Bot 2005).
4. This principle in the case of interpreters is not much different from the general tendency which Venuti (1995, 1998) describes in the history of modern translation and translators in Western countries, and especially in English-speaking countries. I would even say that for interpreters, and in particular for those working outside the booth, this postulate creates an even greater paradox insofar as these interpreters experience this schizophrenic situation permanently and in a more immediate manner while interpreting.
5. There is as yet no significant research in translation studies on interpreters in recent zones of conflict and war, except for some BA or MA theses that contain surveys of the newspaper articles or reports written on this topic. Quite a few newspaper articles did appear and some professional organizations issued press releases or statements, for example, whenever an interpreter got kidnapped or murdered. A member of the AIIC, Eduardo Kahane, wrote in 2007 of the necessity to consider the working conditions and especially the ethical issues of interpreter colleagues in such regions, and in 2009 he published an article in the name of this professional organization with the title "The AIIC Resolution on Interpreters in War and Conflict Zones. Thoughts Towards a New Ethical, Contractual and Political Understanding with Society."

6. See the discussions in the newspapers on whether local interpreters working for the US armed forces should be allowed to wear masks or not (e.g., Londoño 2008, 2009).
7. For a detailed discussion of these (im)possible ideal roles, see Wadensjö (1998), also Dizdar (2006) for the all-pervasive “conduit metaphor” in translation studies in general.

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# Index

## A

Accreditation, 17, 32, 50, 91,  
102–104, 255–256  
Activist, 5, 75, 84, 86, 144,  
251, 274  
Actor [sense 1], 128, 166,  
202–3, 269, 271  
Actor [sense 2] 4, 18, 60, 121,  
136, 138, 159, 210  
Agency [sense 1], 21, 68–9, 71,  
75, 105  
Agency [sense 2], xi–xii, 1–3,  
5, 58, 131, 135–7, 149, 241  
AIIC, x, 50, 52–54, 56–57, 59,  
63, 90, 94, 97, 100, 114, 116,  
119–122, 124–126, 128–133,  
275, 277  
Anglo-American, 3, 20  
Applicant, 25, 32, 34–36,  
38–46, 91, 265  
APTII, 24  
Arabic, x–xi, 54, 62, 137, 152,  
155–172, 268  
ATA, 31, 33, 47, 243  
Attitude, viii–xi, 2, 4–5, 32,  
40, 45–6, 61, 65, 67, 70, 72,  
89, 91–94, 111  
Autonomy, 18, 72–76, 81, 84,  
156

## B

Bilingualism, xii, 55, 135, 140,  
145, 150, 205, 231–236  
Boundaries, xii, 4, 13, 18–19,  
28, 94, 234, 241, 247–261,  
265  
Bourdieu, viii, 4, 11, 14–16, 18,  
69, 135–7, 150, 251–252

## C

Cantonese, 40, 239  
Capital, viii, 4, 11, 13–18,  
22–28, 141  
CATTI, 91  
Certification, ix, 31–48, 71, 78,  
84, 89, 91–94, 102–104, 113,  
115, 240  
Chartered Institute of Lin-  
guists, 31, 41–42, 45–47  
Chinese, ix, 40, 42, 44, 46,  
51, 89–94, 97–98, 100, 105,  
111–113, 115, 239  
Christian, 137, 160  
CIRIN, 51  
Client, 11, 20–21, 23, 27, 37, 42,  
66, 68, 72–73, 75, 78, 84, 91,  
93, 104–110, 114, 127, 200,  
213, 216, 218, 221, 223  
Closure, 14, 18, 25–6, 28, 30,  
252–254  
Competence, xi, 23, 27, 69–72,  
104, 137, 190, 195–196, 204,  
209, 214, 218, 220, 232,  
241–2, 269, 271  
Court, viii, xi, 11, 19–20,  
22–26, 28, 59, 91, 109,  
209–226, 238, 241, 249  
Credentials, 13–18, 32, 39, 254  
Cross-cultural, 2, 55, 192, 196  
Cultural capital, 14–17, 22,  
25–26, 28

## D

Dialogue interpreting, 50  
Diploma, 35, 42, 46, 90–91,  
99, 102–104, 189  
Diplomatic interpreter, xi, 92,  
189–191

Directionality, 54–55, 61

Directorate General for Inter-  
pretation, 59

Dispositions, 4–5, 16, 135–137,  
140, 144, 149, 272

Druze, x, 158, 160, 162, 166

Dutch, 138–145, 148, 150–151

## E

Employment, 34, 41, 53,  
55–56, 94, 129, 176

English, 34–36, 38–42, 44,  
46, 51, 54, 57, 89–90,  
92–94, 97–98, 100, 105–106,  
111–113, 115, 125, 130,  
165, 190–194, 197–198, 201,  
204, 213–214, 216–218, 221,  
226, 234–236, 238–239, 243,  
268, 273, 275

Ethics, xii, 1, 5, 21, 29, 70–72,  
80–81, 120, 212, 216–217,  
221, 240–241, 265, 271

Ethnicity, 2, 150, 158, 233–234,  
239

Ethnography, 199, 204

e-tools, 80

Eurocentric, 68

European Commission, 59

European institutions, 50

Exam-based, 103

Exclusion, 14, 251–252, 258,  
265

Expert, xii, 13, 22, 60, 71, 105,  
122, 126, 128, 131, 171, 181,  
223, 225, 249, 253, 263–264,  
266, 274

Expertise 13, 17–19, 70, 73, 136,  
164–165, 204, 254

- F**  
 Flemish, 138–140, 142–151  
 Freelancers, 24–25, 35, 37,  
 42–43, 45, 54, 68–69, 71–73,  
 75, 78–79, 83, 90–91, 93–94,  
 96–97, 100, 112–116, 125, 129  
 French, 51, 100, 116, 125,  
 130, 138–145, 147–151, 165,  
 212–213, 215, 217–218, 226,  
 268–269, 273  
 Functionalist, 66, 75–76, 109
- G**  
 Gender, 2, 32, 34, 97, 124,  
 129, 174, 177, 185, 239, 247,  
 252–253, 266  
 German, 51, 57, 59, 68, 125,  
 130, 210, 215  
 GIIT, 89, 99, 116  
 Grounded Theory, 257–258
- H**  
 Habitus, x, 1, 4–5, 78, 135–137,  
 139–143, 145, 147–150  
 Hebrew, x, xi, 2, 155–166,  
 170–172, 268  
 Homi Bhabha, 194, 275  
 Hong Kong, ix, 31, 33–37,  
 40–42, 95
- I**  
 Identity, vii–xi, 1–3, 49, 61,  
 66, 89, 91–95, 97–99, 101,  
 103, 105, 107, 109–111, 113,  
 115, 119–121, 123, 130–131,  
 136, 139, 150, 156, 159–160,  
 162, 165–166, 173–177, 184,  
 192, 209, 220, 225, 234, 242,  
 253, 274  
 Ideology, xi, 1, 5, 61, 169, 184,  
 231–237, 240, 242  
 Inclusion, 14, 251, 265  
 In-house, ix, 24–25, 37, 91,  
 93–94, 99–100, 105, 110,  
 112–114  
 Institutionalization, 15,  
 137–138, 150, 253–254  
 Intermediary, 20, 26, 59–60,  
 110, 115, 120–122, 126–128,  
 131, 266, 271  
 Interpersonal Role Inven-  
 tory, 59  
 Interview, vii–viii, 4, 20, 31,  
 34–46, 51–52, 57–58, 61, 126,  
 144, 156, 163, 165, 189–190,  
 193, 197, 200, 204, 223–224,  
 257–258  
 Invisibility, 1, 58, 131, 146, 202,  
 204, 250, 267, 275  
 IOL, 31, 35, 46, 100, 116  
 ITAT, 255
- J**  
 Japanese, xi, 55, 97, 173,  
 178–179, 182, 184–185, 190,  
 192–193, 197, 199, 202, 205  
 Jewish, x, 156–164, 166, 172, 226  
 Job satisfaction, 55–56, 89, 94,  
 101, 113
- K**  
 Korean, 239  
 Kramsch, 194–197
- L**  
 L2, 233–234  
 LAP, 73, 75–76, 78, 84  
 Law, 3, 19–26, 28, 33, 41, 100,  
 140, 150, 194, 210, 220, 224,  
 226, 275  
 Lawyer, 19, 73, 77, 101,  
 104–106, 113, 216, 219–220,  
 223, 225, 253  
 Legal interpreter, 73  
 Legal recognition, 91  
 Legitimation, viii, 11, 15–17,  
 20, 26, 28  
 LEP, 239  
 Licensed occupation, 19  
 Licensing, 104  
 Licensure, 32, 50, 91, 113
- Linguistic diversity, 138, 237  
 Linguistics, 2, 44, 71, 79,  
 81–82, 234, 275  
 Literary translation, xi, 104,  
 137, 139, 147, 150, 155–160,  
 162, 164, 166, 172  
 Literary translator, x, 138–139,  
 150–151, 155–160, 165, 167,  
 172, 176  
 Literature, x–xi, 41, 49, 83,  
 109, 136, 138–146, 149–150,  
 155–160, 162–163, 165, 169,  
 172–173, 175, 181, 183–184  
 Localization, 96  
 Localizers, 84  
 Loyalty, 75, 89, 91–94, 109–  
 110, 114, 122, 127, 269, 271
- M**  
 Mandarin, 111, 239  
 Market, viii, 1, 11–13, 15–16, 19,  
 24, 26, 28, 32–34, 36, 38, 46,  
 55–56, 66, 69, 71, 90–93, 100,  
 102, 107, 114–115, 125, 129–130,  
 132, 196, 252, 254, 259  
 Medicine, 3, 19  
 Membership, 18, 21, 24–25, 52,  
 54, 56, 94, 97, 113, 125–126,  
 130–131, 164, 247, 252  
 Meta-discourse, 119, 121, 131  
 Metaphors, 57, 121–122, 127,  
 130–131, 194, 201–202, 205,  
 251–252, 268, 272, 276  
 Multilingual, 60, 73, 205, 231,  
 240
- N**  
 NAATI, 50  
 NAJIT, 214, 221  
 Neutrality, 23, 60, 89, 91, 93,  
 114–115, 204, 222, 224, 240  
 Non-specialist, 21, 69, 73  
 Norms, 1, 89, 92–94, 107, 109,  
 113–115, 121, 141, 148–149,  
 176, 194, 203, 254  
 Notary public, 26, 27

**O**

Occupational group, vii, viii,  
xii, 2-4, 12-13, 22-25, 27,  
72, 169, 247-248, 251, 253,  
259, 265  
ÖGSDV, 255  
Oral history, viii, xi, 189, 190  
Ottoman rule, 156-158

**P**

Palestinian, 160, 163, 165  
Part-time(r), 37, 71, 93-101, 103-  
106, 108, 110-113, 255-256  
Performance, xii, 1, 3, 18,  
20, 46, 121, 218-219, 222,  
236-237, 267, 273-274  
Personality, 43, 55  
Philology, 2, 142  
Police, 22, 23, 176, 209-210,  
212, 223, 268-269  
Postcolonial, 194, 275  
Practice, vii, ix, xi, xii, 2, 4, 11,  
14-15, 17, 20-22, 26-27, 45,  
56, 65, 67, 70, 72, 76, 80-81,  
84, 89, 91, 114-115, 120, 136,  
161, 174-175, 194-196, 200  
Practitioners, ix, 2, 4-5, 14,  
16, 21, 49-50, 56, 61, 66, 72,  
84-85, 92, 112, 120-121, 123,  
176, 242, 266-267, 275  
Prestige, 3-4, 13, 15, 22, 139,  
143, 147, 156, 162,  
Profession, vii, ix, 2-5, 11-12,  
15-18, 21, 26-27, 49-50, 54,  
65, 67, 70-73, 78-79, 80-81,  
83-85, 90-91, 93-94, 97-99,  
102, 104-106, 113-115, 119,  
122-123, 131, 147, 156, 161,  
165-166, 175-176, 191,  
201-202, 205, 210, 240, 247,  
253-254, 256-258, 264-265,  
268, 271, 274  
Professional identity, viii-  
ix, xi, 49, 89, 94, 98, 113,  
120-121, 123, 130-131, 173,  
209, 225, 274,

Professionalism, xii, 3, 65-66,  
70, 72, 75, 78, 91, 122, 176,  
224-225, 234, 240, 242-243,  
254, 258, 263, 265-267, 271, 273  
Professionalization, viii, x,  
4, 11, 13, 14, 28, 32, 89, 91,  
93, 114, 247-249, 251, 253,  
257-258, 264-265  
Psycholinguistics, 234  
Publisher, 36, 41, 97, 105,  
147-8, 167, 171, 175-177, 181,  
183, 187

**Q**

Qualifications, 19, 31-36,  
38-42, 44-46, 55, 57, 71,  
78-79, 81, 84, 103-104, 106,  
187, 210  
Qualitative, vii-x, 4, 35, 40,  
50, 52, 55, 61, 113, 257  
Quality, 18, 32-33, 43-44, 49,  
53, 56, 61, 66, 90-91, 104,  
115, 120, 123-124, 183, 203,  
240, 259  
Questionnaire, ix, xi, 4-5,  
52-55, 57, 59, 61, 65-67, 85,  
93-95, 97-99, 120, 123-124,  
128, 130, 156, 163, 169, 172

**R**

Race, 2, 174, 199, 226  
Ranking, 31, 38-40, 42, 56,  
111, 127  
Refugees, xii, 163, 220,  
263-264, 266  
Register, 107, 139, 148, 240  
Repertoire, 2, 5, 136, 143, 158,  
178, 237  
Replication, 56, 61, 124  
Representativity, 93, 95-96  
Resistance, 12-13, 23, 27, 92,  
107, 268, 271  
Resume, 31, 33-39, 42-46  
Role, 6, 56, 59, 61, 62, 68, 70,  
110, 116, 117, 123, 124, 132,  
227, 228, 229, 243, 245, 276

Role perception, xi, 70, 131,  
189-190, 200-201, 203-204  
Russian, xi, 173, 175, 177-180,  
182-185, 188

**S**

Sampling, ix, 35, 49, 52-54, 61,  
81, 94, 99, 123-124  
Screening, 31-32, 44  
Secretary, 77-78  
Self-image, ix-xi, 135, 139-  
140, 143, 149, 209, 224-225  
Self-perception, ix, 2, 12, 49,  
56, 89, 95  
Self-preservation, 115  
Self-regulation, 22  
Sensitizing concepts, 255, 257  
Service provider, 36, 122, 126,  
128, 211, 238, 264  
SIA, 91, 100, 116  
Signaling, ix, 31-33, 35, 37, 39,  
40, 44, 45-46  
Similar-status jobs, 77  
SISU, 89, 94, 99, 116  
Social capital, 14, 17-18, 22,  
24-28  
Societal language, 231-232,  
237, 243  
Socio-cultural, 4, 5, 58, 136,  
138, 160, 165  
Sociolinguistics, 234  
Software, 96, 124, 127  
Spanish, viii, 11-12, 19-27, 54,  
129, 220, 235-236, 238-239  
Specialization, viii, 11, 17, 25,  
55, 68, 94, 100, 105, 113  
Specialized training, 71, 91  
STA, 100, 116  
Status, vii-ix, 1-4, 12-13, 25,  
28, 50, 54, 65-67, 76-78, 82,  
84, 87, 89, 91-94, 97, 101,  
103-106, 110, 113, 115, 119,  
121, 129, 137-138, 143, 148,  
150, 160-161, 201, 212, 218,  
239, 248, 251-252, 254, 259,  
263, 267-268



Strategies, viii, 3–4, 11, 13, 15,  
25, 28, 51, 70, 80–81, 115,  
139, 148, 175, 180, 199, 238,  
251–254, 257–258, 267, 271  
Stratification, 16, 22, 28  
Stress, 56–57, 209, 211, 222,  
269  
Subaltern, 264–265  
Survey, ix, x, xii, 4–5, 23, 45,  
49–55, 57, 59, 65–68, 81–82,  
84, 89, 93–94, 96–97, 100,  
113, 117, 119–120, 123–124,  
126–128, 131–132, 264, 275  
  
T  
T/I theory, 80, 82  
TAC, 100, 116  
TATI, 100, 116  
Teacher, 3, 34, 68, 73, 76–77,  
80–81, 98–99, 101, 104–106,  
113, 141–142, 146, 151,

161–162, 171, 180, 232, 236,  
238–239, 264  
Technology, 33, 73, 90, 194  
The Church, 142, 151  
In-between, xii, 194, 263,  
266–267, 275  
Title, 32, 37, 70, 72, 150, 181,  
275  
Training, 13–14, 16, 20–22, 24,  
26–27, 31, 33, 44, 46–47,  
65–66, 70–71, 73, 78–82,  
89–94, 102–104, 113, 115–116,  
137, 139, 148, 161, 237–238,  
241, 255–256, 274  
Translation theory, ix, 194  
TRC, 211  
Trial, xi, 25, 94, 209–210, 212,  
214–220, 226  
Trust, 13–14, 18, 21–22, 25–26,  
28, 46, 91, 268  
Turkish, 268, 269

U  
United Nations, 50, 90, 122,  
132  
University degree, 19–20, 25,  
32, 34, 36, 39–40, 42, 45  
University module, 80–82

V  
Venice Symposium, 52, 57–58  
Vietnamese, 239

W  
Web-based survey, x, 61, 119–  
120, 123–124, 130–131–132  
Work experience, 31, 34,  
38–42, 44–46, 82  
Writer, 69, 77, 106, 140,  
142–142, 145–146, 148, 150,  
160, 162–165, 175–177, 183,  
215, 249, 266  
WTO, 90